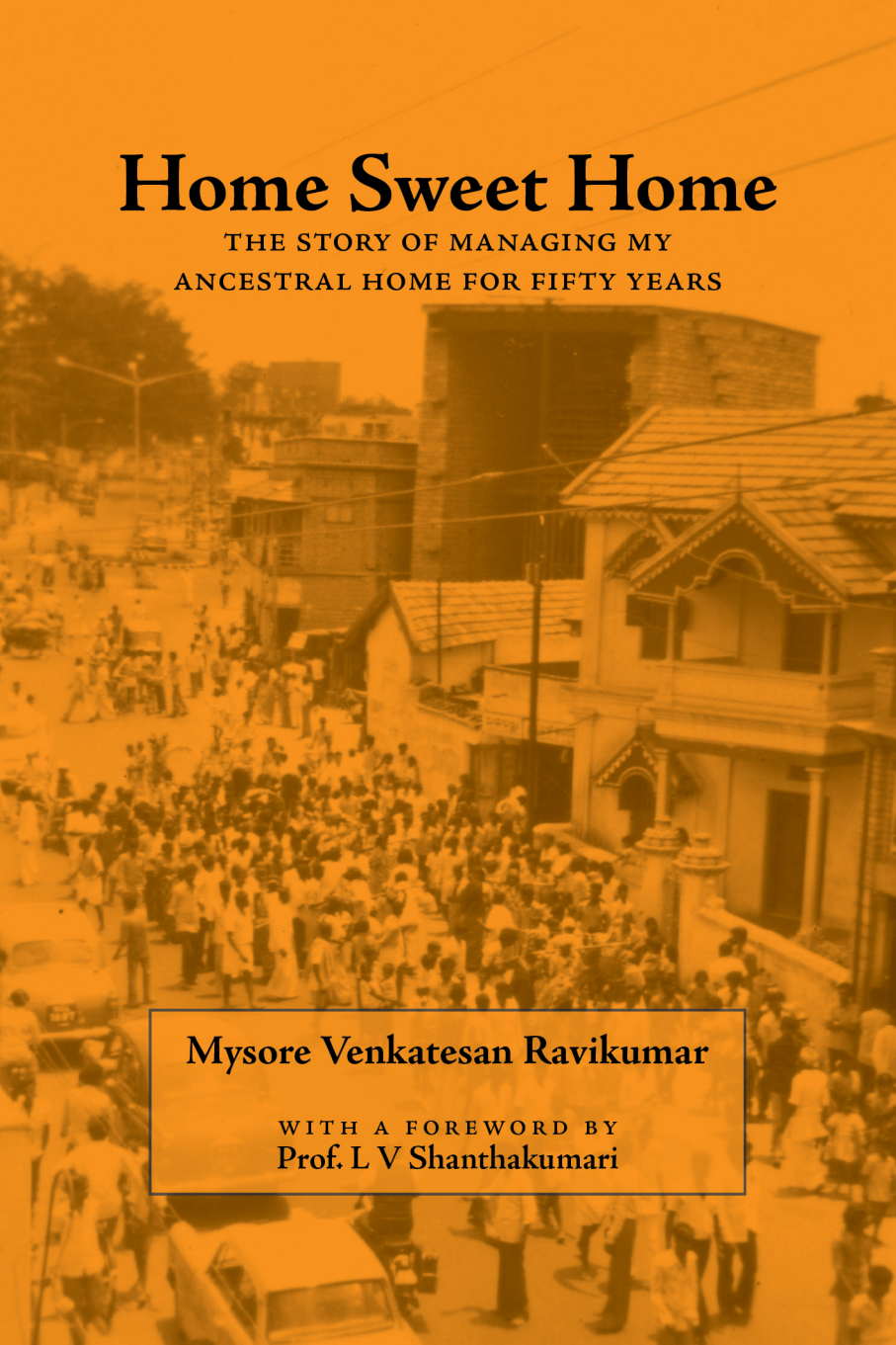
Home Sweet Home

THE STORY OF MANAGING MY ANCESTRAL HOME FOR FIFTY YEARS



Mysore Venkatesan Ravikumar

WITH A FOREWORD BY
Prof. L V Shanthakumari

"This is an absorbing narration of renovation of an ancestral house, a saga of calm planning blending modernity with tradition, with liberal autobiographical sketches that reveal the personality of a battle-hardened man who faced many trials and tribulations while achieving this tremendous task but made no mention of them."

G KRISHNA PRASAD
Retired LIC Executive

"The enormity of the task of 'building a house,' specially in the past, is aptly epitomised in a popular Kannada proverb. The undertaking becomes even more exacting when a house needs to be modified with parts of it retained or inmates still dwelling there. In this book, Dr. Ravikumar describes the travails of such endeavours, with a parallel message running through the narrative that makes the process a metaphor for *how a person can accomplish and live well with what is available at any given moment*. Along with practical information and philosophical insights, the chapters capture an endearing yet objective view of the varied personalities involved at various stages. The advice provided will remain valuable to younger minds in a number of ways!"

SUSHAMA YERMAL M.Ed., Ph.D.
Consultant for Teacher Improvement

"It won't be any exaggeration to call this a mini encyclopedia. The author artfully explains the process of evolution of a joint family, starting from the migration of his elders, the transformation of a bamboo-thatched roof into a modern mansion, nurturing values while acquiring knowledge and doing social work, the principles of co-existence with

relatives and friends along the underlying spirit of *Atithi devo bhava*, the nuances of civil constructions and the evolution of a modern kitchen. In short, a story of how great men evolved – *walking the talk*."

GURUMOORTHY IYER
Writer and former ABB Executive

"*Home Sweet Home* is an excellent piece of fine recollections, both major and minor, of the people, pattern and purpose that *Srinivasa Nilayam* had woven through across some five to six decades past. The book has laid them out for us all to grasp with meticulous care, in steady sequence and often with an emotional touch as an undercurrent throughout. ...in addition, I found it to be a source of much pride and joy as it is a cousin of mine who had made all this happen. His persistent keenness and enormous desire to gather these vast pertinent backdrop data amidst his own many other responsibilities and commitments has simply and happily defied my own imagination so often.

"In a very tiny way it is also a rare treat for me to feel a bit *pumped up*, as I myself happened to be amongst family members who had *once upon a time* dwelt in that ancestral '**80 Old Madras Road**!' But for the author's painstaking process of gathering of facts, figures, personalities, anecdotes and plans wrapped around this tiny mansion historically, I could not have possibly felt that feeling of being richer mentally. A precious resource! Bravo for having poured out such enormous effort, energy and insights into this noble enterprise!"

A R VIVEK
Retired Scientist, USA

Home Sweet Home

THE STORY OF MANAGING MY
ANCESTRAL HOME FOR FIFTY YEARS

Mysore Venkatesan Ravikumar PhD

WITH A FOREWORD BY
Prof. L V Shanthakumari

Kaveri Trust
BENGALURU, INDIA

PUBLISHED BY
Kaveri Trust
#136 Swami Vivekananda Road
Halasuru, Bengaluru 560008

© M V Ravikumar

FIRST EDITION
14th March 2022
(Celebrating *Matusri* Smt. Indira Venkatesan's 95th birthday)

COPYEDITING
Hema Ravikumar

EDITING AND DESIGN
Hari Ravikumar

TYPESET IN
Adobe Jenson Pro

PRINTED AT
Repromen Offset Pvt. Ltd.
#46/47 Krishna Reddy Colony
Domlur, Bengaluru 560 071
krish@repromen.com

I humbly dedicate this work to
the memory of my ancestors

HOME SWEET HOME

Home is not merely roof and room,
not just a place to eat and sleep.
Home is where minds can bloom
and live lives that are true and deep.
What is home with none to seat,
none to welcome and none to greet?
House becomes *home*, nice and sweet
only when there are loved ones to meet!

MVR

FOREWORD 9
by Prof. L V Shanthakumari

PUBLISHER'S NOTE 14
by Hema Ravikumar

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 16

Introduction 21
Musings on Migration 25
Locality and Ancestral Home 31
Joint Family System 39
Tenants 52
Modifications and Additions 69
Conclusion 113

EPILOGUE 115
by Ram Ravikumar

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 118

FOREWORD

All living beings need shelter: birds build nests, wild beasts find refuge in caves or in thick forests, cows and suchlike domestic animals are housed in pens and farmyards. And human beings, from the dawn of civilization, have created many sorts of shelters according to the conditions of the place they inhabit. To-day, we have come a long way from pre-historic cave-men. The construction of houses has become an art in itself and houses are created according to the taste, status, and financial position of the dweller.

The history of the migration of Dr. Ravikumar's ancestors bridges Tamil Nadu and Karnataka through the strong thread of scholarship. In the nineteenth century, Ravikumar's forefathers on his mother's side were invited from Tamil Nadu to settle down in villages like Sosale. Thus, the writing of this book spans a period of nearly two centuries! Hailing from a family of scholars and himself being highly educated, Ravikumar's writing is imbued with cultural values and

offers a guideline to the present generation. Preserving, reconstructing, and reinforcing the old ancestral house only seems a pretext to regenerate the values of our grand culture and heritage.

Ravikumar's Herculean effort of managing, preserving, and rebuilding his ancestral abode prods us to muse upon the value of emotional attachment we have regarding the house built by our ancestors. Every brick of the house we lived in sings umpteen sweet songs mixed with some sad notes. Every nook and corner of the house evokes myriad moments of past events. More than this, Ravikumar's writings are pertinent in these times, for to-day families that once lived together with emotional bonds and kinship have been torn asunder with even nuclear families being broken up. In a sense, a joint family is like a *world that has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls* (to borrow a phrase from Tagore). Joint family offers emotional security as well as mutual love and support. Children will typically be safe, secure, and happy with their grand-parents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. They naturally learn to love, share, and adjust; they rarely feel loneliness, a malaise afflicting many of the present-day children.

I grew up in a joint family, along with my father's three brothers, their wives, children, and many other relatives of my grandmother. In that expansive, old-fashioned, *taarasi* house (with Madras Tiles)—with

two verandahs, a separate section for cooking, balconies from where we could pluck *champaka* flowers, coconut and mango trees—we children spent carefree and happy times. Although the house had several rooms, there was no separate room for a single child. Children studied together in the same room, sitting on the floor. There were no separate wash-rooms either. To-day each child has a separate room that has an attached wash-room; this I think restricts a child interacting with other members of the family. Again, dinner was partaken together. All the children would wash their hands and legs, sit together and one of the elders would give us *kai tuttu* – a morsel of food placed on cupped palms. The food would be mixed together in a big bowl – cooked rice with *rasam* or *huli*, and the elder would take a morsel that would be a little less than a fistful and place it on the cupped palm of the children, one by one. There was no need for plates and spoons nor for water and soap to wash them later.

If one fell sick, it was not a matter of much worry when in a joint family. But to-day, there are instances where hospitalization becomes inevitable because there is nobody to take care of the diseased at home. When I was five or six, my mother contracted typhoid fever. My grandmother and my aunts nursed her back to health without making much noise about it. And once, when I fractured my hand, starting from my grandmother,

uncles, aunts, and cousins – all of them consoled me. So many voices of love! Can a child in a nuclear family receive such unbridled affection inside her house? There are some disadvantages in a joint family too, but with mutual understanding and shouldering responsibility equally, this can be solved.

An important question that comes to mind is: *Why should we preserve our ancestral home – why is it so essential?* A home is a tiny point that expands into the huge circumference of a nation, what we call '*raashtra*.' To preserve the structure, heritage, and culture of our home is equal to preserving the cultural heritage of our land.

While renovating and rebuilding one's ancestral home one comes across the structural, socio-cultural, economic, and scientific changes that have occurred through the changing times. This aspect is explored well by Ravikumar in the segment on *Evolving Kitchen*. From firewood stoves to charcoal stoves to kerosene stoves all the way to gas, electric, and induction stoves, we have progressed. We have moved from kerosene lamps to electricity and now to solar energy. From the era of grinders, mortars, and pestles, we have reached the age of wet grinders and electric mixers.

I heartily congratulate Sri M V Ravikumar for his adamantine persistence and his decision to hold on to his ancestral house even at the cost of great physical and

mental effort as well as money. This work is, as I have mentioned earlier, equal to preserving and safeguarding the cultural heritage of our country.

I am happy to note the active co-operation of Smt. Hema Ravikumar, Hari, and Ram in this endeavour. While the initial note by Hema sets the context for the book, the Epilogue by Ram touches the emotions of readers. I thank my young friend Hari for giving me an opportunity not only to read this manuscript but also to write something about it.

With regards,
L V Shanthakumari*

MAHA SHIVARATRI 2022
BENGALURU

Prof. L V Shanthakumari is a senior scholar and author in Kannada and English. She has taught literature for several decades and has authored over thirty books. Her creative appreciation of Dr. S L Bhyrappa's novels is a landmark contribution to the literary world. Her recent books include a Kannada translation of the writings of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus and a comparative study of the translations of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* into English (by Edward Fitzgerald) and Kannada (by D V Gundappa).

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

HUMAN BEINGS NEED shelter in the first place, perhaps even before food and clothing. The shelter becomes a *house* if it is one's own and it becomes a *home* if it accommodates joint families and welcomes relatives and friends with open arms! *Home Sweet Home* is all about such a *home* that has seen six generations, a rare occurrence in this era, that too in a metropolitan city like Bengaluru.

It is a Herculean task to modify an old house situated on a main road; one can imagine the efforts involved in multiple modifications in a span of over five decades. All this was done with the hope that it will be a dwelling place for a few more generations. It calls for a great deal of *dedication*, *enthusiasm*, *toil*, *grit*, *patience*, *perseverance*, and *selflessness*, apart from the required finances and support from the family members.

In the early 1970s, Ravi started modifying his ancestral home even as he was a college-going student. It was he who named the house '*Srinivasa Nilayam*' in

memory of his paternal grandfather, who in 1935—soon after his retirement—had modified the old house bought by *his* father, perhaps with a vision that his son and grandchildren could live comfortably. It is heartening to see that Ravi has imbibed his grandfather's vision, though he never got a chance to see him.

In this small book, Ravi has narrated the situations and circumstances under which he has executed the various modifications and additions to the house of his forefathers. All through the book, he keeps alive the interest of the readers with exciting anecdotes and details of a bygone era but rarely does he write about the personal hardships that he underwent, which were by no means insignificant.

Starting with *Roots and Wings* (2005), this is the tenth book published by Kaveri Trust. I'm sure that all the members of Ravi's immediate family, his relatives, and some of his friends will enjoy reading it.

4th FEBRUARY 2022
BENGALURU

Hema Ravikumar*

* HEMA RAVIKUMAR taught Statistics at the *Malleswaram Ladies Association Pre-University College* for thirty-six years before retiring as the Principal. In addition to writing popular textbooks on the subject, she has been a paper-setter, syllabus committee member, and evaluator. Trained from childhood in singing, Hema holds a post-proficiency (*vidvat*) in Carnatic music. She serves as a trustee of *Kaveri Trust* and a director of *EduLeadLife India Pvt. Ltd.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is natural to have special attachment to our ancestral home, native village, or motherland, for our roots lie there. Further, we grow up listening from our elders the stories about our forefathers or native town, which get embedded in our memories. And when we near the evening of our lives, invariably we recall those sweet memories. Through this little book, I reminisce episodes related to modifying and managing our ancestral home *Srinivasa Nilayam* over the last fifty years.

Between October 2018 and March 2020, I wrote fortnightly blogs. The contents of those thirty-five blogs helped me publish my autobiography *Doing Well, Feeling Happy* in July 2020, when I turned seventy. Since then, I was contemplating writing about how my ancestral home played an important role in my life over the last five decades. I continued my blog series and wrote another fifteen pieces in the first half of 2021 narrating the story of my ancestral home and how it was modified.

All through this journey, a major role has been played by my elders (particularly my mother and paternal grandmother) and my immediate family – Hema, Hari, and Ram, who not only encouraged me to write but also supported me in other ways: Hema proofread the manuscript twice, Hari edited and designed the book, Ram scanned several photographs and wrote a thoughtful Epilogue. My sincere thanks to them. Bharath—my first protégé after establishing *Impact Foundation* to support start-ups—continues to help me as and when I need him. Thank you, Bharath!

I wish to express my thanks to my niece's daughter Mahathi, who is a budding architect and to Akhila, an established young architect and the daughter of my good friend Jaishanker, for the sketches in the book.

I am deeply grateful to the literary giant Prof. L V Shanthakumari for patiently going through the book and graciously writing a lovely Foreword. I extend my sincere thanks to other reviewers of the book – my well-wishers Dr. Sushama Yermal and Sri Gurumoorthy Iyer as well as my cousins Sri G Krishna Prasad (maternal) and Sri A R Vivek (paternal) – who have been kind enough to read through the book and give their invaluable feedback.

My special thanks to my good friend Rtn. V Krishnamoorthy, Managing Director, *Repromen Offset Printers* for enthusiastically supporting all my publishing work.

I acknowledge the contributions of all my siblings, their families, and several of my relatives who have been supporting me directly or indirectly in all my endeavours.

Mysore Venkatesan Ravikumar

HOME SWEET HOME

Introduction

I think it's fair to assume that our lives aren't perfect. At no stage does life give us the cushion of *not choosing* between two things and just doing what we want *without any consequences*. In fact life is *always* about choice. We are constantly choosing. The toughest choice, however, is the one between our *passion* and our *responsibilities*. If what one loves to do happens to align with what is practically necessary, then the individual is fortunate! Often, people are not really aware of what they really love to do but go by what is convenient for them in a bid to fulfil their aspirations and requirements.

When I analysed life with a view to understand myself with respect to other living beings, the obvious thing I found in common was *sustaining survival*. All living beings go through their lives as per their nature to survive, but humans must invest time and efforts to understand sustainable survival in terms of *balanced well-being* – in the *physical*, *emotional*, *economic*, and *social* planes. Another important outcome of my analysis was that no two humans have an identical nature.

Human nature can perhaps be categorised under the following types – *analytical*, *administrative*, *accumulative*, and *accepting*. It would be ideal if we could choose our academic and economic requirements to align with our predominant nature, although we should have a combination of all the four to take the appropriate decision for a given situation and to lead a contended life. However, the process of discovering the dominant type and the proportion of the types that we should possess for different situations to lead a happy life may not be straightforward.

We need to have focus and comprehension to learn from elders, environment, and experiences.

Life gives us situations, not solutions. Solutions are always created by our knowledge or wisdom, which comes out of understanding. The physicist Max Planck (1858–1947), who won the Nobel Prize for his discovery of energy quantum (the famous 'Quantum Theory') once said, "Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And that is because, we ourselves are part of nature and therefore part of the mystery that we are trying to solve. Knowledge consists in the search for truth. It is not the search for certainty."

I gained knowledge mostly by trial and error, rather than through systematic and scientific study, which would have been ideal. The trial-and-error process not only needs more time but is also difficult without

the right teacher or mentor. Incidentally, my practice aligned with the thoughts of the great Austrian-British philosopher Karl Popper (1902–94) who wrote, "Since we can never know anything for sure, it is simply not worth searching for certainty; but it is well worth searching for truth; and we do this chiefly by searching for mistakes, so that we can correct them."

In my view, the three important resources that we need for managing life effectively are, *Time*, *Relationships*, and *Money* in addition to our *body* and *mind*; the order and efforts may vary depending on the situation. Knowing oneself perhaps may be the first step to build a rapport between one's own body and mind as well as with others – immediate relatives, friends, colleagues at work, and neighbours.

Generally, I have preferred operating through institutions, rather than working alone. Whatever tasks I undertook on behalf of an institution, I fully committed myself and contributed to the best of my abilities – be it in the family as a member, school/college as a student, industry/office as an employee/employer, industry association/social-service organisation as an office-bearer, or trust/foundation as a trustee.

Rather than *competition*, I have believed in *collaboration* and *cooperation* for improving myself. This approach has worked well for me during my fifty-three years of adulthood so far.

At an early age, I had to take up responsibility of managing my ancestral home along with my other academic and extra-curricular activities, long before understanding the practices and strategies to be adopted. Initially I considered it as my *duty* and that became a *responsibility* over years.

While *duty* is a moral commitment to something or someone, *responsibility* is a condition of being responsible. In case of *duty*, the person will be involved in the activity without any self-interest, whereas *responsibility* can be termed as an ability to act at one's own will, without any supervision. It is the obligation to successfully complete an assigned task.

Taking up the responsibility of managing repairs and construction of my ancestral home or renting out a part of the premises enabled me not only to focus on family-related activities but also made me understand many professional aspects of life. I was fortunate to have the right environment at home (mainly *non-interference* from my elders and later, my wife) and so I enjoyed the *responsibility* of making modifications and additions to my ancestral home.

Managing the house of my forefathers has become such an integral part of my life that my autobiography, *Doing Well, Feeling Happy*, which I wrote sometime back (July 2020), will be incomplete without *Home, Sweet Home*.

Musings on Migration

Flight is one of the most astounding attributes of birds. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of flight is one that we cannot see – the ability of birds to traverse great—sometimes incredible—distances. The Arctic Tern is the world champion of long-distance migration. Tracking studies have found that these birds make annual journeys of about 70,000 kms. Birds migrate from areas of low or decreasing resources to areas of high or increasing resources. The two primary resources being sought are food and shelter (nesting location).

Early humans migrated for similar reasons – changing climate and landscape as well as inadequate food-supply for the population. The *Age of Exploration* and *European Colonialism* led to an accelerated pace of migration. War, genocide, and natural calamity, as also the crisis sparked by them, had an enormous impact on migration. Since the eighteenth century, the pace of migration appears to be on the rise. Trans-national labour migration reached a peak of three million

migrants per year in the early twentieth century. These days, people even migrate to settle down in a quieter place after retirement from work.

Historically, men have typically migrated for work (profession or business) and women because of marriage. In India, as per the 2011 census, nearly 454 million people (37% of the country's population) settled in cities or towns that were different from their previous place of residence. During 2001–11, 70% of people who migrated were women, mainly because of marriage.

M RAGHAVACHARI

It was sometime during early 1870s that my father's paternal grandfather Raghavachari[1] migrated from a small village named Madhuravasal, situated eight and half miles from Madras, to the city of Bangalore to take up a clerical job at the *Bangalore City Corporation* office that was situated in Mayo Hall on South Parade Road (now Mahatma Gandhi Road). This is the first recorded migration on my father's side.

1 My apologies to readers who have read some of our previous publications (*Roots and Wings, Kutumba,* and *Doing Well, Feeling Happy*) for repeating some of the facts about my ancestors. It is for those reading this book without that background information.

MAYO HALL, BANGALORE (C. 1878)

In 1888, my father's maternal grandfather Thiruvengadachar migrated from the village of Sholingur (it was here that the Second Anglo-Mysore War was fought between Sir Eyre Coote and Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan in 1781), situated around fifty-nine miles from Madras, to the city of Nellore, which is situated on the banks of River Penna, to take up the job of a school teacher.

It is interesting to observe that both my great-grandfathers on my father's side, although born and brought up in villages that were closer to the well-developed Madras, migrated to the neighbouring states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh for the sake of employment.

My maternal grandmother's great-grandfather Srinivasacharya migrated to Karnataka sometime in the early 1860s from Karur, a small town in Tamil

Nadu. *Maharaja* Krishnaraja Wodeyar III of Mysore had invited him for his scholarship in the scriptures and he was subsequently given lands and gold to settle down in the village of Ukkaligere, twenty-nine miles from Mysore. As per our ancestral records, Karur Srinivasacharya was born twenty-three generations after Sudarshanacharya, a direct disciple of Ramanujacharya, the famed eleventh century proponent of the *Vishishtadvaita* school of Vedanta philosophy.

My maternal grandfather's grandfather Ramanuja Chakravarti was invited to Sosale owing to his scholarship, also in the early 1860s. He was given lands and a house by the local chieftain of Sosale, a village that is twenty-two miles from Mysore, and was asked to take care of the management of the *Sri Venugopalasvami Devasthana*.[2] Earlier, Ramanuja Chakravarti lived in Kalale, a village that is nineteen miles from Mysore. He was a descendant of one of the seventy-four *chakravartin*s or religious teachers nominated by Ramanujacharya to spread the *Vaishnava* ideology.

Unlike my father's grandfathers who migrated for employment, my mother's great grandfathers migrated from relatively well-established towns to obscure villages on invitation for their scholarly prowess and achievements.

2 Today, the *devasthana* is managed by a trust with many of my maternal cousins as trustees, my maternal uncle's son Rajagopal being the main caretaker.

Raghavachari, who moved from Madhuravasal to Bangalore, was living in a rented house in Ulsoor (now called Halasuru), which was the closest residential area to Mayo Hall. Ulsoor has the renowned *Someshvara Devasthana*, which was built during the time of King Rajaraja Chola (*c.* 11th century CE).

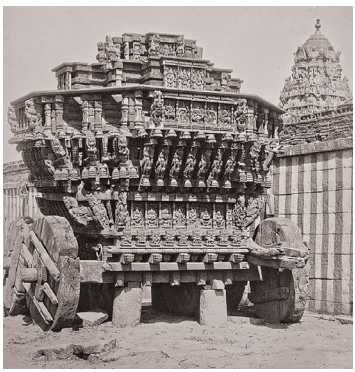
THIRUVENGADAMMA

In 1876, Raghavachari got married to Thiruvengadamma, who was born and brought up in the village of Pattasomanahalli (near today's Pandavapura), twenty miles from Mysore. Thiruvengadamma's only sister had been widowed and was living in her father's house. Raghavachari's father-in-law, who was himself a widower, suggested the idea of buying a house in Bangalore with a request to take care of his widowed daughter as well. He handed over to his son-in-law a few hundred rupees, the proceeds from the sale of his lands.

A gentleman by name Kistnaiah who was serving in the durbar of the Maharaja of Mysore was given a piece of land in Halasuru as a gift by the king, on which he had built a spacious house with bamboo and mud roof. In 1877, Kistnaiah was looking for a buyer for his house as he was desperately in need of money.

Around the same time Raghavachari, who had rented out Kistnaiah's house, was also looking to buy a house in Halasuru.

After a good deal of negotiation, the spacious and eco-friendly house built on a 120 ft. x 40 ft. site was bought for a princely sum of eight hundred rupees! The house was situated on the artery road leading to Madras and had to its right a *Subrahmanya Devalaya* (less than 100 metres), the *Someshvara Devasthana* in the front (less than 150 metres), and to the left, a *Kempamma Koil* (less than 100 metres). Within a few months of Raghavachari and family buying the house, his first child Kanakammal was born.



THE FAMOUS 'TERU' (CAR) OF ULSOOR (C. 1870)

Thus, starting August 1877, Madhuravasal Raghavachari started his family life in his own home at Bangalore surrounded by temples with a new-born.

Locality and Ancestral Home

No self is of itself alone.
It has a long chain of intellectual ancestors.
The 'I' is chained to ancestry by many factors.
This is not mere allegory, but an eternal memory.

ERWIN SCHRÖDINGER

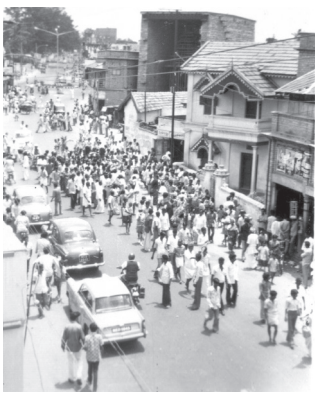
The village of Bengaluru is said to have been gifted to Kempe Gowda I (1513–69) by the Vijayanagar emperors. The Ulsoor Lake was built by his successor, Kempe Gowda II, and is the only surviving tank built by the Gowda kings in Bangalore. The first British military station was set up in Ulsoor in 1807.

ULSOOR LAKE

Halasuru is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in the city of Bangalore. Earlier, Halasuru was considered to be in the eastern end of Bangalore with a dominant Tamil-speaking population. Halasuru is renowned for its numerous temples and narrow streets. There was a jackfruit orchard near Ulsoor Lake; the Kannada name for jackfruit being '*Halasina hannu*,' the area came to be called 'Halasooru' ('*ooru*' means 'town' in Kannada). During the British rule, the name was anglicised to 'Ulsoor' (or 'Alasoor'). Most residents of Halasuru were either from the working class or were small-time traders or contractors. Now it is very much part of central Bangalore and has become quite cosmopolitan.

Every house will have a postal address. When Raghavachari bought the house from Kistnaiah in 1877, the address was *#32, Madras Road, Ulsoor, Bangalore*.

SRINIVASA NILAYAM

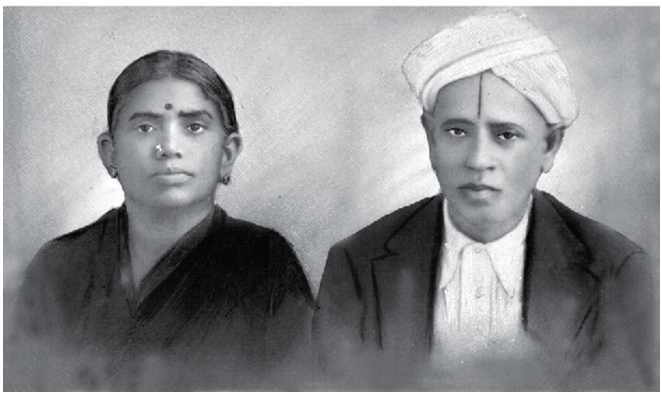


OLD MADRAS ROAD

CAR STREET

Just as the house went through several modifications over time, the address underwent changes on a few occasions. In 1940s, the address of the house changed to *#80, Old Madras Road* ('Old' because an alternate road to Madras was laid through Hosur), and then to *#136, Old Madras Road*. When the name 'Madras' was changed to 'Chennai' in the 1990s, the address became *#136, Swami Vivekananda Road* (because there is a *Swami Vivekananda Ashram* situated on the road about 250 metres from our home).

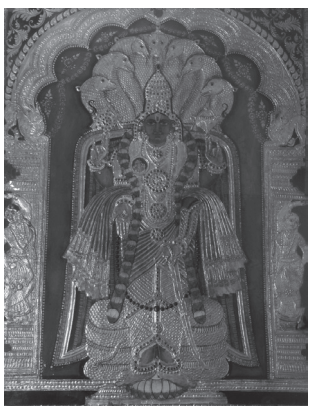
Our ancestral home was already *seventy-three-years old* when I was born. Most of the information that I have gathered about my ancestral home is from my paternal grandmother Kaveriammal, who moved into this house sometime during 1901 from Nellore after she got married to M A Srinivasachar, the eldest son and second child of Raghavachari. Over the years, I learnt more about my paternal forefathers and the house from Prof. M Narayana Iyengar—Kaveriammal's brother, who was a Professor of Mathematics—since he also happened to be the son-in-law of Kanakammal (who was my grandfather's elder sister), the first child born in our ancestral home.



KAVERIAMMAL & M A SRINIVASACHAR

While buying the house, Raghavachari got some valuable works of art along with it – a unique Tanjore painting of Lord Srinivasa, a replica of which

is supposed to be in the Srirangam *Ranganatha Devasthana* and the Melkote *Cheluvanarayana-svami Devalaya*; a painting of the 'English Durbar' that was exclusively held for British officials during Dasara at Mysore, which is a replica of the painting on display at the *Victoria and Albert Museum*, London, with the only other copy at *Jaganmohan Palace*, Mysore (many have visited our ancestral home just to have look at these two paintings!); and another Tanjore painting, of a popular motif – Baby Krishna.



LORD SRINIVASA

BABY KRISHNA

ENGLISH DURBAR (C. 1848)

During the nineteenth century many houses did not have a gate or door in the front and our ancestral home was no exception. The main door of the house was some sixteen feet inside, from the main road. There were two *tinnai*s (pyols or raised platforms) in the front veranda. In addition to being used by the family members of the house—mostly the menfolk sat on the *tinnai* to engage in casual badinage—strangers too could take rest there without entering the house. Sometimes, their needs—like water or food—would be taken care of by the members of the household. This is just an illustration of the hospitality of the people in the bygone days.

ULSOOR IN THE EARLY DAYS

The house had two verandas – one in the front with the *tinnai*s and the other at the back. As one entered from the front veranda, there was a big hall and six rooms – three to the right and three to the left, in addition to the dining hall and kitchen. One room was exclusively assigned for women who had delivered

babies (and was called by a bilingual name: '*Pillai-petta* Room'). Since 1877, starting from Kanakammal (1877–1973), more than *twenty* members of my family, including me, my younger brother, and my younger sister Vijayalakshmi were born in our ancestral home. It was only since 1963, when my youngest sister Latha was born, that babies were delivered at hospital.

There was one shelf in the dining hall called '*Ganga porai*' ('Ganga Shelf'). I came to know later—*circa* 1960—why the shelf got such a name. When the house was bought, there was a small shelf in the wall in which water from the sacred river Ganga was kept. When people are on the deathbed, there is a practice of feeding a few spoons of the holy water to them. After people turned fifty, they typically visited pilgrimage centres such as Haridwar and Banaras, collected water from the Ganga, and brought it home.

The house was built with bricks covered with mud and later a coat of lime. The roof at a height of eight feet was laid on a bamboo structure covered with mat and mud mixed with lime. The top of the roof was coated with some mix to make it waterproof. The roof was supported by wooden pillars. There was a small raised platform in the kitchen on which the fireplace for cooking was built (called *aduppu* in Tamil) with stone, bricks, and mud. The toilet was some forty feet away from the back of the house. There was an independent *puja* room, which doubled as a store room.

In the evenings, typically the house was lit with oil lamps; it was much later that electrification took place. On any given day, there would easily be between eight and fifteen people living in the house. In fact, even a couple of weddings were performed in the house!

FAMILY PHOTO TAKEN IN THE BACKYARD OF THE HOUSE (C. 1964)

Joint Family System

If the family is like a tree
and the various members are like branches,
each one grows in different directions,
yet the roots remain the same.

Living Together

Born in my ancestral home as the third child of the fourth generation, it was fascinating for me to visualise the world of my forefathers and understand the way they lived. It is also interesting to note how the career of five generations (i.e., including my two sons) evolved over time.

I mentioned that my paternal great-grandfather Raghavachari migrated to Bangalore in the 1870s to take up a job in the *City Corporation*. My paternal grandfather, M A Srinivasachar got a job in the state government's insurance department—which in those days was called *Mysore Government Insurance Department* (MGID)—possibly because his brother-in-law

S Krishnamachar[1] was already employed as an officer in MGID in 1899.[2] My father, Mysore Venkatesan, took up a job in the central government—*Military Engineering Services*—in the early 1940s.

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT INSURANCE DEPARTMENT

During the early 1970s, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) like *Bharat Electronics Limited* (BEL), *Hindustan Aeronautics Limited* (HAL), *Hindustan Machine Tools Limited* (HMT), and *Indian Telephone Industries Limited* (ITI), most of which were established post-

1 Husband of Kanakammal, who was the first child born in our ancestral home.

2 MGID was established in 1891 and many years later, it was renamed as *Karnataka Government Insurance Department* (KGID).

independence, were the major job-providers for engineering graduates in Bangalore. After completing my engineering in 1973, I gained employment in ITI as an Assistant Executive Engineer in the *Research and Development* department. In 1984, I resigned my job and became a full-time entrepreneur.

By the time new millennium emerged, with a few exceptions, most of the PSUs were fading and Information Technology was the emerging domain; the likes of *Tata Consultancy Services* (TCS), *Wipro*, and *Infosys* became the major job-providers. In 2006, my elder son Hari, a fourth-year engineering student, got a job offer from *Infosys* (then an emerging Indian multinational company) during campus placement. In a year's time he resigned from his job; having worked for five to six years with an international non-profit organization, a music school, and a couple of start-ups, he chose to be a writer-editor-designer-violinist. My younger son Ram, after completing his B.Com., got a few offers through campus placement from TCS, *Infosys*, and *AXA Financial Services*, but he joined a Chartered Accountancy Program and presently works as an independent auditor.

Each generation evolved progressively from the perspective of type of organisation they worked for—either being employed by others or being self-employed—and their approach to managing the Joint Family system also changed over time.

Generally, the man who earned money for the family was considered as the *Head* of the family and the womenfolk of the house worked under the guidance of his wife. However, during the period from 1877 to the early 1930s, it was Lakshammal (known as Yatchi *paati*)—the widowed sister-in-law of Raghavachari—and Kaveriammal from the 1930s till the 1970s, who called the shots in the Ulsoor home!

By the early 1970s, I assumed charge of managing the house affairs because I understood the need for managing the place based on logic and alignment with the external world rather than emotions and sentiments.

Raghavachari and Thiruvengadamma had two daughters and two sons – Kanakammal (1877–1973), Srinivasachar (1880–1942), Krishnammal (1884–1902), and Venkateshachar (1886–1941). When Kanakammal was eleven, she was married to the twenty-year-old S Krishnamachar. Krishnamachar's father had died young and he grew up with his maternal uncle, a barrister educated in England. This perhaps motivated Krishnamachar to become a graduate and he was employed with the MGID as an officer.

R K Sridhar Murthy[3], who has authored a book on Malleswaram, explains that both Malleswaram and Basavanagudi had been developed prior to the plague attack in 1898. In 1896, as part of a city expansion

3 *www.deccanherald.com/content/185500/plague-shook-bangalore*

plan, plots in Basavanagudi and Malleswaram were put up for sale. But there were hardly any takers since the rates were high and people were not eager to shift to new, under-developed localities. The most documented and dreaded outbreak in India was of bubonic plague (1896–99) that spread terror across Bombay and Calcutta Presidencies; it also attacked Bangalore around 1898 and changed the situation. The rates were drastically lowered to encourage people to move to new layouts, thus relieving congestion in the city.[4] This perhaps motivated Krishnamachar to buy a site and build a small house in Malleswaram sometime in 1902.

In 1899, M A Srinivasachar got employed in the same department as his brother-in-law and later got married to Kaveriammal from Nellore. In 1901, she moved into the Ulsoor home to live with her husband's family. The first child born to the couple became a victim of plague. Subsequently, the entire family at Ulsoor shifted to Malleswaram to live with Kanakammal's family. As he was living with his brother-in-law, young Srinivasachar helped him in building additional rooms to the existing house. This perhaps gave him the relevant experience to take up the rebuilding of Ulsoor house later in his life.

Krishnammal got married to Kuppuswamy, whose parents were also living in Ulsoor, but she died young. The couple had one son.

4 *www.bmcrilitclub.wordpress.com*

The youngest of Raghavachari's children, Venkateshachar was working for *Indian Railways* in Mysore. After getting his only daughter married, he took early retirement in favour of his son-in-law getting his job. He came back to Ulsoor to put up a sweets and confectionaries store and apparently lost a lot of money in business. His elder brother Srinivaschar paid him a substantial amount of money and had him sign a 'release deed' for the Ulsoor property. Thus, Srinivasachar's only son Venkatesan inherited the property after his father's death in 1942.

In 1925, Srinivasachar and Kaveriammal's only daughter Kanakammal (1912–97) was married to A V Ramasawmi (1899–1980), who had completed his Engineering Diploma from the *Indian Institute of Science*. The first three children of the couple as well as the eighth one were born in the Ulsoor house.

Just before retiring in 1935, Srinivasachar planned to completely modify the old house and got all the approvals from the *City Corporation*. He spent almost ten months to rebuild the house spending all his retirement money. While retaining the old plan, a new one was built with a high roof – partly Madras Terrace (front portion) and partly tiled roof (rear portion) for better light and ventilation.

I had the opportunity to see the accounts that my grandfather had maintained for making the main door

of the house (which we have retained to this day). It cost him a princely sum of two hundred rupees. While the original house including the cost of site was eight hundred rupees in 1877, the cost of simply making the main door in 1935 was a quarter of that amount. One can understand the cost escalation in six decades.

THE MAIN DOOR

A year after Srinivasachar's untimely death in 1942, his only son Venkatesan, who was pursuing an internship in Bezwada (now Vijayawada), got married to Indira and settled down with his widowed mother at Ulsoor. Venkatesan's brother-in-law A V Ramasawmi, who was working for a British company, was posted to Dacca (now Dhaka); so he had left his six children—ages four to fifteen—at the Ulsoor house for the purpose of schooling under the guardianship of Venkatesan and Indira. The couple thus started their married life with a huge responsibility although they had the support of the just-widowed Kaveriammal.

Evolving Kitchen

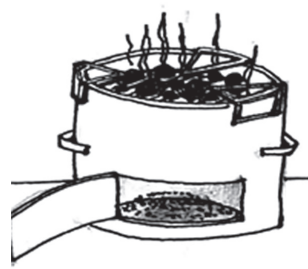
At the time of my birth, my family was not particularly orthodox in terms of strictly following the prescribed traditional rules. But my forefathers—both paternal and maternal—were orthodox in this traditional sense. They never ate out, in restaurants or eateries. Typically, they ate only what was cooked at home. I don't recall going out with elders to restaurants when I was young, with one exception. Once a month, my father took me to a restaurant and bought me *idli*s early in the morning, before taking me for a haircut. Perhaps he was worried that I must have enough energy to go through the process or it was an incentive for me not to fuss!

It was only after I joined the *National Cadet Corps* during my high school years (1964–67) that I was

really initiated into eating outside food. After the weekly parade, we were given a 'snacks coupon' worth 60 paise to eat at a restaurant near school. I particularly enjoyed the *Masala dosa*, bread-butter-jam, and *Masala chai* that the restaurant served.

When I recall eating the sweets, savouries, or even the day-to-day food that my mother prepared during my childhood days, my mouth waters even now. Over the last seventy years, I have seen our kitchen evolving in terms of the cooking mechanism. But the taste of the food cooked by mother for decades remained the same!

During my earliest years, I remember seeing my mother cooking food with firewood and a charcoal stove. We did not have a refrigerator and so she cooked twice or even thrice a day. Ours being a joint family, she spent half her waking hours in the kitchen. On some of the festive days, she woke up long before the crack of dawn because the food had to be ready before the rituals began.



CHARCOAL STOVE

It was during the late 1950s that I saw for the first time a kerosene stove with a burner. Subsequently there were several types of kerosene stoves with wicks. During my years as a student of engineering (1968–73), I would prepare tea for myself on the

kerosene stove, because I woke up early—often at two in the morning—to study. Removing the carbon on the wicks and changing the wicks (when they became so short in length that they were not immersed in the kerosene) were painful tasks, which my mother did patiently—and wordlessly—on a regular basis, to ensure I did not have any problem in the early mornings to make my tea.

KEROSENE STOVE

In early 1973 I bought a stove with an LPG cylinder from the local *Indian Oil* distributor for a princely sum of two hundred and seventy rupees (which was close to my father's monthly take-home salary at that time) to put an end to the job of constantly changing wicks.

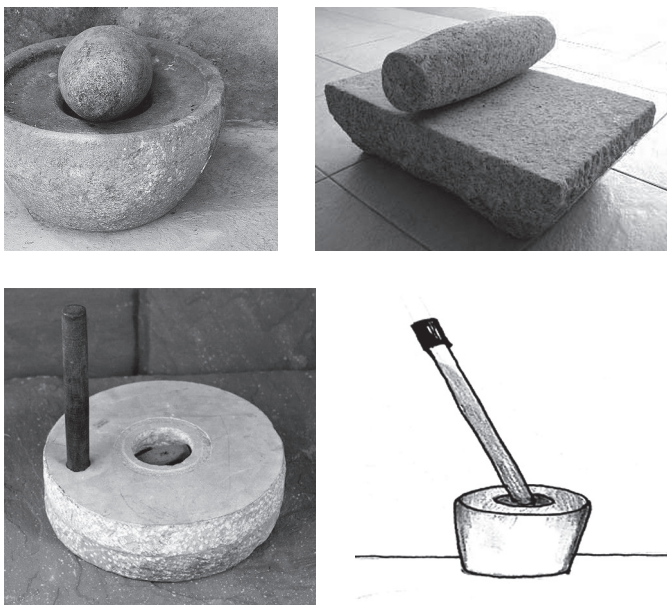
In 1990, when my wife visited Singapore she bought an electric oven-toaster, which she often used to make pizzas and sandwiches for the children. In 1999, when I visited Australia on work, I bought a microwave oven for the first time. Thus, in a span of fifty years (1950–2000), I have witnessed generational changes in the means of cooking – from firewood to microwave![5]

Another interesting aspect of cooking in the early years of my childhood was the multitude of processes

5 For a short while, we also used an induction stove.

involved in preparing the ingredients for making tasty food. Most of the ingredients were prepared at home and only the raw materials were procured from the grocery store. I shall give a few examples.

To make the batter for South Indian breakfast delicacies like *dosa*, *idli*, *vada*, etc., there was a stone grinder. To make a paste of ginger with turmeric, salt, and so on, there was another type of grinding stone. To remove the husk from paddy, in another type of stone grinder women would thump it with a pestle; later on, they separated the husk from the rice by filtering. For



DIFFERENT TYPES OF GRINDING STONES

making a powder of rice or wheat, they had another type of stone grinder. I also remember the days when my grandmother would prepare coffee-powder during the afternoons by manually rotating the handle of the coffee-grinder while having a chat with my mother. Most of the above items that were made at home are available today in a ready-to-use form.

During the first major modification of the house that I undertook, in 1976, I found many of these stone grinders in the kitchen and store-room and used them for the foundation of the building! Since 1976, all these stone grinders were replaced by one electric mixergrinder (or 'mixie'). Around the same time, entrepreneurs from Coimbatore came up with wet grinders for making *dosa* and *idli* batter, which became a household kitchen appliance like the mixie. And now, the *dosa*/*idli* batter can be bought directly from the store or delivered to your door-step in a matter of minutes.

In the joint family system, the job of cooking and cleaning was shared by the ladies living in the house. While the one who had culinary skills was directly involved in cooking, the others would busy themselves with mechanical jobs like grinding. Similarly, while the one who understood fabrics well was involved in washing the clothes and folding after drying them in the sun, the others washed the vessels and cleaned the floors. Today, we have intelligent robots even to clean the floor!

These days we have access to a variety of tasty foods coming to our doorstep with the click of a button – be it through *Swiggy* or *Zomato*. On festive occasions, we increasingly outsource the cooking to catering firms. This has made our life that much simpler and the food is sometimes tastier but we do miss the affection and the excitement. For this very reason, my mother and Hema have always been reluctant to outsource the cooking to a caterer unless the number of guests is in excess of forty or fifty and it becomes too much of a strain. The feeling of offering hospitality to our guests is much stronger when the food is home-made!

Tenants

We had tenants in our ancestral house spanning a period of seventy years (1936–2006). The purpose of letting out the complete house or a portion of it varied from time to time, so I grouped the tenants under three sub-headings.

Care-taker Tenants

Immediately after his retirement in 1935, M A Srinivasachar seems to have initiated the modification of the bamboo-roofed house built on mud walls. He turned it into a *pucca* house with Madras-terrace for the front portion and tiled roof for the rear, supported by Burma teak pillars and beams (unlike today's RCC pillars and beams). He invested all his retirement benefits in rebuilding the old house after obtaining a release deed from his only brother so that later on, his son would not have to face legal issues.

When my cousin Hemalatha visited us, she often mentioned, "*Thatha* had taken money from my *hundi*

(piggy bank) to make good for the shortfall during the fabrication of the entrance door and so, a part of this door belongs to me!" Today, that entrance door is an antique piece; it is difficult to repair and perhaps impossible to replicate.

However, Srinivasachar was not fortunate enough to live in the modified ancestral home as destiny had different plans.

The Srinivasachar-Kaveriammal couple had two children – Kanakammal (1912–97) and Venkatesan (1916–89). Kanakammal, who was married to Ramasawmi in 1927, had given birth to Rajagopal (1928–2015), Hemalatha (1930–2019), and Sounderrajan (1932–99) at our ancestral home. In 1936, Kanakammal was pregnant with her sixth child, Anand (1936–99) and was living at Salem where A V Ramasawmi was the Chief Engineer with the *Erode Electricity Board*. Kaveriammal wanted to help her daughter at the time of delivery and during the post-partum period, so Srinivasachar had to accompany her to Salem. He reluctantly let out the newly-built house to one Dr. Vijayaraghavan, a medical practitioner, for a meagre sum of thirty rupees and requested him to take care of the house properly till he returned.

Srinivasachar was not particularly comfortable living in his son-in-law's house at Salem although it was a palatial residence with many servants. He had

just retired as Office Superintendent from MGID and soon after got busy with rebuilding his old house. Being jobless, he found it difficult to spend his time meaningfully in Salem, although there were grandchildren around. He was also suffering from diabetes. Looking at his restlessness, Kaveriammal thought it would be better if he lived in Mysore with her brother Prof. Narayana Iyengar, because there were people to take care of him.

Prof. Narayana Iyengar (1895–1974) was teaching Mathematics at *Maharaja's College*, Mysore and was living with his family which included his six children—ages two to seventeen—and widowed mother-in-law, Kanakammal (*i.e.*, Srinivasachar's sister). While Kaveriammal spent her time in Salem taking care of

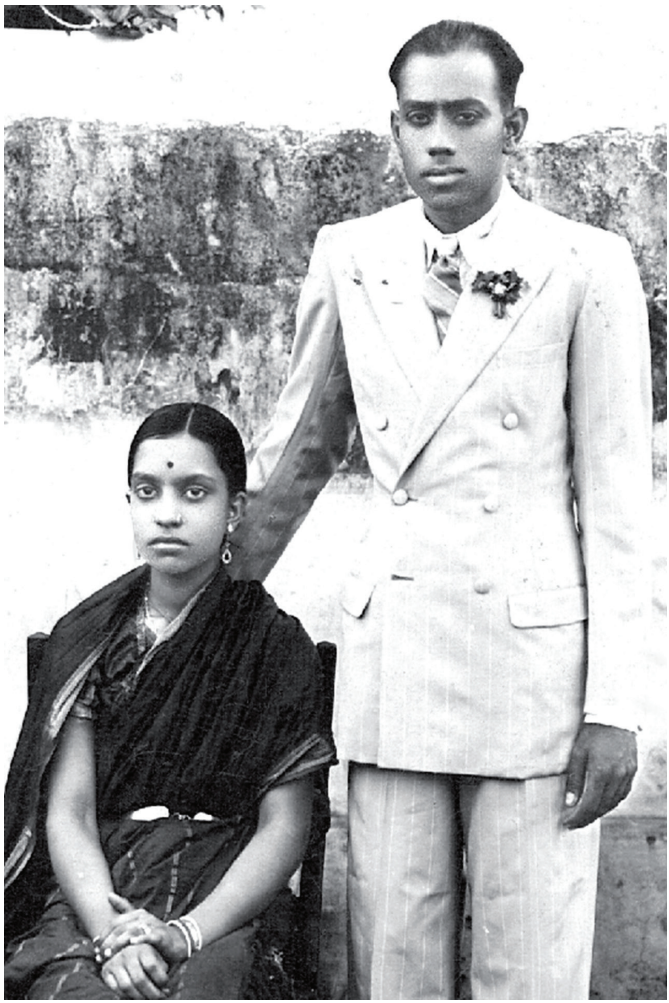
SRINIVASACHAR (WITH THE WALKING STICK) AT PROF. NARAYANA IYENGAR'S HOUSE (C. 1941)

grandchildren and helping her daughter (who lost her seventh child in 1938 and had her eighth in 1939), Srinivasachar's health was deteriorating over time.

Srinivasachar breathed his last in 1942, which was also the time Ramasawmi was transferred to Dacca (then a part of Undivided India) while his family was still in Salem. He suggested to his brother-in-law Venkatesan, who was then doing his internship in Bezwada, to settle down at Bangalore in his ancestral house so that his six children could be admitted to school there. In 1942, my father got a job in *Military Engineering Service* (MES), courtesy his brother-in-law.

Dr. Vijayaraghavan, having lived in our ancestral home for nearly six years for a measly rent, vacated it without any fuss. Meanwhile, Kanakammal started looking for an alliance for her brother. She visited her uncle Prof. Narayana Iyengar at Mysore. It so happened that Prof. Narayana Iyengar's neighbour was one Chakravilasamma. Her brother Gopala Krishnamachari was the second son-in-law of Srinivasa Gopalan and Chengamalam. She knew that Chegamalam was looking for a suitable match for her fourth and youngest daughter – the sixteen-year-old Indira. She quickly arranged to get Indira to Prof. Narayana Iyengar's house for Kanakammal to approve.

Thus, Venkatesan got married to Indira in May 1943 and began his family life in his ancestral home.



INDIRA & VENKATESAN (1943)

This went on smoothly and by 1955 Venkatesan and Indira had five children. Sometime in 1956, for asking his boss uncomfortable questions at work, he was transferred to Khadakavasala, a remote village on the outskirts of Poona where the *National Defence Academy* was coming up. My father had to shift with his family (mother, wife, and five children) to Khadakavasala.

Before moving out of Bangalore, my father identified one Bowerlal Surana belonging to the Marwari Jain community, who was looking for a large house for his joint family of three brothers. A nominal rent of seventy rupees a month and ten months' rent as advance was fixed. Kaveriammal handed over the keys of the house to Bowerlal in front of the painting of Lord Srinivasa and told him, "He is the witness! You have to hand over the keys back to us whenever we return!" Every year Bowerlal used to write to Venkatesan giving the details of expenses that he incurred for maintaining the house and adjusted them against the rent that he owed.

In April 1960, Kaveriammal brought my elder sister and me back to Bangalore from Coonoor (where Ramasawmi had purchased a palatial house in 1956 for his post-retirement life). She brought us back to Bangalore with a view to enrol us into a school. We had spent the whole of the previous year living a carefree life in Coonoor. On reaching Bangalore, we stayed with Rukminiammal (1906–82), Kaveriammal's youngest

sister at Malleswaram (six miles from Ulsoor) because our ancestral home had been let out.

A few days after reaching Bangalore, along with Rukminiammal's son Kuppuswamy, we visited Bowerlal to inform him that we were back and that we wanted the house for ourselves. Much to our shock, he had changed the backyard and the interior of the house to suit the convenience of his family. All the trees – badam, cashew, drumstick and neem – and the various flowering plants had vanished. In their place we saw an out-house and a couple of toilets with some empty land between the rear door of the house and the out-house. A few wooden attics had come up in a couple of rooms which housed items like vessels, cycles, etc., which had been mortgaged to Bowerlal (as he was in the lending business). Bowerlal told us that he needed some time to find a suitable place for shifting his large joint family.

Kaveriammal suggested that at least a room be given to start with and he can take some time for finding another house. She further said, apart from two of us, the other two kids will also shortly come back with the parents and hence, we will need more space. Bowerlal reluctantly vacated one room at the back with an attic, to which we moved in early May.

By end of May, my parents and other two siblings returned from Khadakavasala (my eldest sister passed away in 1957 having succumbed to type-1 diabetes).

My father borrowed some money from his brother-in-law Ramasawmi to build one room and a bath-room so that the family could live with some ease. Though Bowerlal had released one more room by the time my parents returned, it took *three* more years for him to find another house and hand over complete possession of the house to us. Meanwhile his third son Jawaharlal who then was studying in school became my good friend and our friendship continued for a long time.

Residential Tenants

For little more than three years (1960–63) we lived in a small portion of our ancestral home like we were tenants, while our tenant Bowerlal and his family lived in the main house. We had an independent entrance to the backyard right behind the house and we went around our building to enter our portion of the house. Initially it was a little funny but we got used to it. As a student, I used the attic for my studies and sleep. During those years I spent some time in gardening as we had some empty land in the backyard. Living with a Marwari Jain family also helped me pick up rudiments of the Marwari language.

After moving into the main house, to make good for the rent that we were getting, my father let out the portion that we were occupying earlier. The rent he got for that small portion almost matched the rent we had

been getting for the main house. Apart from living in the bigger portion of the house, our economic status remained the same – middle-class. But I could now bring my friends home to play in the backyard, which I could not do when Bowerlal and his family were living there; at that time, my playing was limited only with the sons of Bowerlal and his brothers.

During 1963–71 we had tenants of different characteristics. Our tenant after Bowerlal was Visveswaran, a Tamil Iyer, who was employed with *Defence Accounts*. He had a habit of using snuff, which would be followed by thunderous sneezing! His wife Kamala was a silent lady. The couple had three daughters; the eldest one Uma, a chubby girl, used to learn Carnatic music from our neighbour, who also happened to be branch manager of the bank where my elder sister Vasanthalakshmi was employed. In addition to being plump, Uma was not particularly a gifted singer. We had good fun at her cost.

Around this time, my maternal cousins Krishna Prasad (aka Babu) and Sreemathi were staying with us. While Sreemathi was doing her post-graduation in Zoology at *Central College*, Babu was working for *Life Insurance Corporation*. During late 1964 their father Gopala Krishnamachari, who was diagnosed with cancer, was admitted to *Bowring General Hospital*, Shivajinagar (a couple of miles from our home). My

other two cousins also joined their siblings to take care of their father. Unfortunately he passed away in January 1965. For the first time I witnessed death in our ancestral home, although I had earlier witnessed the deaths of my elder sister Kankalakshmi at Kadakavasala in 1957 and A V Ramasawmi's uncle Rangaswami at Coonoor in 1959.

After Sreemathi completed her M.Sc. in May 1965, my cousins shifted to another place. I moved into the front room where they were living. The feeling of *being independent* was kindled at the age of fifteen.

In 1966, Visveswaran got transferred and Doraiswamy, another Tamil Iyer who was also working in *Defence Accounts*, moved in with his family. His wife was rather ferocious. We often heard her shouting at her husband, children (three of them – a boy and two girls), and sometimes indirectly even at my mother! For some reason, she was terribly frustrated. Doraiswamy, who was almost blind due to glaucoma, silently managed his family life.

My cousins Sounder and Nagaraj, who were managing a departmental stores at Coonoor, were cheated by their business partner and suffered heavy financial losses. So in 1967, my uncle Ramasawmi decided to shift Sounder (along with his wife and son) and Nagaraj's family (his wife and two children) from Coonoor to our house. Shifting to Bangalore was

mainly to enable the education of his grandchildren and the employment of Sounder. That year, our house was over-crowded. On top of it, Sounder's brother-in-law, who was working in Coimbatore would visit us often on work and many a time stay back. After a few days' stay, with the money saved from the allowances that his company paid him for boarding and lodging, he bought clothes for his family members!

Doraiswamy retired prematurely in 1968 owing to his blindness and hence vacated the house. In moved Keshavaiah, a Telugu-speaking Shetty, with his family (mother, wife, and three daughters). He owned a provision store in the building adjacent to ours. Keshavaiah's wife Shakuntala was pregnant with her fourth child when they moved in. To the utter disappointment of Keshavaiah, she gave birth to a baby girl for the fourth time. He became furious and along with his mother started abusing his wife. My grandmother Kaveriammal, known for her strong values, one day threatened him in chaste Telugu armed with a broomstick in hand, "If you don't stop abusing your wife, I will beat you with this and throw you out! What is her fault in all this?" He was shell-shocked listening to those words from an elderly *brahmana* lady and stopped abusing his wife. Shakuntala conceived again the following year and to her luck, this time she gave birth to a baby boy.

In 1969, Sounder and his family moved to out-house after it was vacated by Muniswamy and his family who were living there even before we returned in 1960. Meanwhile, Nagaraj had got a job in Madras and his family shifted there.

In February 1971, my sister Vasanthalakshmi's marriage with K T Narasimha Iyengar (KTN) was fixed. The wedding was supposed to take place in early June at Tirupathi so that her siblings—the four of us—could complete their school/college examinations. Unfortunately, KTN's mother had a heart-attack in March and some of her relatives suggested that we conduct the wedding at the earliest so that she could witness her son's wedding. My father had to organize the wedding at very short notice and was unable to mobilize the required funds. He did not have an alternative but to sell the backyard including the out-house and the toilets. Vasanthi's wedding was performed in our ancestral home in April. Because of the sale, both Sounder and Keshavaiah had to vacate their respective portions by May.

Commercial Tenants

Between the sixth and seventh semesters of my engineering course, in June 1971, I ventured taking up a construction project for the first time – building a toilet and a store-room apart from shifting the water

and sewage connections from the back of the house to the front of the house because we had sold the back portion.

My father, who was employed with *Military Engineering Services* (MES), brought a couple of masons – Kannan and Muthu who were full-time workers at MES. Of the two, Kannan, who must have been in his late twenties, was more enterprising. When I explained him our requirements, he said he would organize everything – procurement of materials, construction, carpentry, and electrification. He said that it would be better to get a Plumbing Contractor who had good relationships with the *Bangalore Water Supply and Sewage Board* (BWSSB) because we needed permission for road-cutting to connect the water and sewage lines to the respective main lines. The main road was always busy, so we had to additionally obtain police permission. I identified one Thulasiraj of *Aruna Plumbing Works*, who had an office in *Ulsoor Market*. After surveying the site he said he would take care of all the plumbing work including road-cutting permission. The whole project was completed in about three weeks costing us a little more than three thousand rupees. In the process, I became familiar with construction-related activities and befriended Kannan (a mason *cum* self-proclaimed contractor), Thulasiraj (plumbing contractor), Doraiswamy (carpenter), and Babu (electrician).

Since we were strict vegetarians, it was imperative that our residential tenants were also vegetarians. All the tenants we had—four of them during 1957–71—were vegetarians. Nearly for a year and a half during 1971–72, there were no tenants. My father was still in service and the four of us were busy with our academics.

For a few months my maternal uncle Ramanujam (1924–2021), a senior officer in the *Department of Education*, stayed with us because he was transferred from Mysore to Bangalore. I had a great time during his stay. Four of us – my father, my uncle, my younger brother, and I – used to play card games every night for a couple of hours after dinner. This helped me break the monotony of engineering studies. During his short stay, there were occasions when some teachers visited him in the evenings or during the weekend to share their grievances regarding non-payment of salaries or transfers. I have been a witness to a few of these meetings (because he and I shared the front room) and have seen my uncle listening carefully and assuring them that he would look in to their grievances. He lived his life like the proverbial *karma-yogi*.

We had a neighbour by name Ramachandran, who worked for *Bangalore Telephones* as a clerk and also managed a part-time *Job Typing Services* business from his home. In late 1972, he approached me to find out whether I would be interested in letting out one of

the two road-facing rooms of our ancestral house for commercial purpose.

Ramachandran was making the inquiry on behalf of Vargheese, a retired *Indian Air Force* staff member, who owned a shoe shop in the neighbourhood and wanted to shift to a bigger space nearby to retain his existing clientele. I had just then finished my ninth semester of engineering and was having holidays. I thought it may be better to let out a room to a commercial enterprise so that we could get the same rent that we were getting by renting a portion of the house (three rooms with a bathroom and toilet).

When I discussed this matter with my family elders, they simply said, "You are the one to manage the house in the future, so use your discretion and take a call!" Some of my relatives discouraged me saying that commercial tenants don't vacate the place easily once their business is set, and even if they vacate, they may demand exorbitant sums as compensation for loss of business.

I went ahead and discussed with Vargheese the terms and conditions. I told him, "My father is the sole earning member of our family and the four of us are still students. My father doesn't have any savings. The monthly rent can be one hundred rupees but you must pay an advance of five thousand rupees (the normal practice in Bangalore is ten months' rent) to meet the

cost of modifications and obtaining a licence from the *Bangalore City Corporation* (BCC) to convert a residential premises to a commercial one." Surprisingly, he agreed immediately and gave a token advance of ₹1,001.

Our immediate neighbour was a Maharashtrian *brahmana* family. The youngest of the four sons, Krishnamurthy, was a draughtsman working in the BCC office. He was privately designing building plans. I approached him to help me out in designing the required structure for converting the room into a shop since a rolling shutter had to be installed. I also requested him to help me in getting the license from BCC. He agreed to do both. I used the services of Kannan of MES to do the necessary modifications.

By end of January 1973, Vargheese opened his show-room – *Escorts Shoe Company*.

I completed my engineering course by June 1973 and was employed with a private company, *Avalon Products* as Design Engineer-Trainee. In September, once again Ramachandran approached me, this time along with one Paul Mundackkal who was from Madras. After preliminary introductions, Paul said that he was managing a construction business as well as distributorship of *Toshiba Anand Battery*. He further said that his second son Sojan Paul, aged about twenty years, could not continue his education due to

health-related issues. Hence, he wanted to establish a departmental store for him as a means to earn his livelihood. He was wondering whether I was willing to let out the other road-facing room.

Although I had been using that room, by then I had completed my studies; I felt it may be better to let it out. After all, we had five more rooms. Paul agreed to my proposal of a monthly rent of a hundred and twenty-five rupees and an advance of eight thousand rupees. Once again, I sought Krishnamurthy's help to get the plan approved from BCC and Kannan for the necessary modifications.

DELITE Departmental Stores was inaugurated in early November 1973.

Thus, we had two commercial tenants and both were, incidentally, Kerala Christians. By 1974, the monthly rent that we were receiving by letting out two road-facing rooms for commercial purpose was three times more than the rent that we had received by letting out the whole house or portion of the house during 1957–71!

Modifications and Additions

Building the First Floor

In March 1974, I joined *Indian Telephone Industries Limited* (ITI). Within a month I was posted to the *Research and Development* (R&D) Department and was handed over a couple of projects. The intense R&D work coupled with managing my team evoked excitement in me. In August 1974, I joined a one-year executive post-graduate diploma in Industrial Management that *Bangalore University* had just started. Most of 1974 and 1975 I was extremely busy with work and studies.

ITI Bhavan, Bangalore

To break the monotony of my weekly routine, I spent my weekends in *DELITE Departmental Stores*. I was curious to understand consumer behaviour and cash-flow management. Paul Mundackkal initially told me that he was establishing the shop for his second son Sojan but after he established the store, he shifted with his family from Madras to Bangalore.

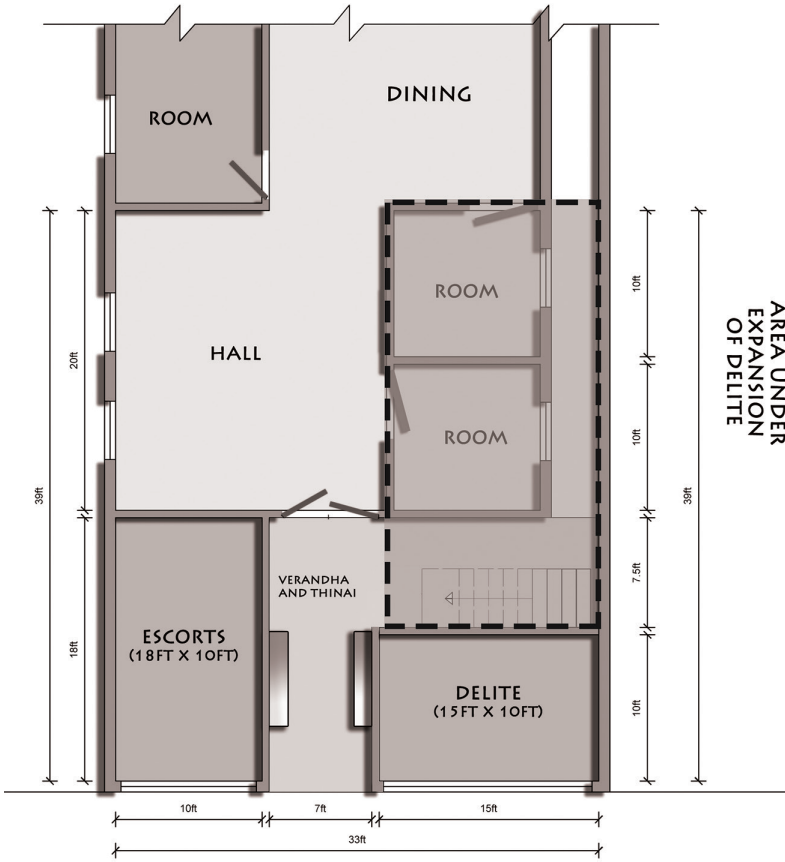
Having started his business journey at the age of eighteen, Paul had come up the hard way. He must have been around fifty when he shifted to Bangalore. Paul had eight children – six sons and two daughters, same as my aunt Kanakammal, and in the exact same order! His eldest son Dr. Jose Paul, who is a year younger than me, had just completed his MBBS from *Nagpur Medical College*. Paul found a good alliance – one who could pay a lakh of rupees as dowry (according to Kerala Christian family practices) and got Jose married in 1975 when he was just twenty-four. Over time, Jose became a good friend of mine. In a short period of two years, I had practically become a family member of Paul as I picked up a fair bit of spoken Malayalam.

In June 1976 Paul discussed with me his expansion plans as the business was growing. He wanted to convert the department stores into a wholesale *cum* retail shop. In today's business parlance, in addition to B2C, he wanted to serve the B2B market as well. He needed four times the current floor space for expansion. I asked him to give me some time to think it over.

My father was retiring by the end of July 1976. My younger sister Vijayalakshmi and younger brother Raghuraman had just then completed their post-graduation. They had planned to pursue further studies. My youngest sister Latha was still in school. Considering all this, I felt that an additional rental income would help the family. Having done a few small construction projects in the past, I was better prepared mentally to manage a bigger project. I estimated the expenses that I would have to incur for the modifications. It was around fifty thousand rupees – *ten times* that of the previous project, which I had undertaken in 1973. In July 1976, Viji and Raghu moved to Delhi for their higher studies. So we were only five of us at home – my grandmother, my parents, my youngest sister, and me.

Behind the DELITE store, there was a *verandah* and the staircase room leading to the open terrace. Apart from these two, there were two more rooms behind the staircase room that had to be included for the proposed expansion. Hence, I decided to build a first floor with three rooms and a bathroom to make good for the rooms in the ground floor that we had to let out. This way we would not only get additional rent but also have additional rooms on the first floor. This would enable me to shift to first floor making my living more independent.

Having decided to build the first floor, I explained to Paul that he would have to finance most of the



OLD MADRAS ROAD

PLAN FOR MODIFICATION OF THE GROUND FLOOR (1976)

construction cost and adjust it against the monthly rent for the next five to six years, depending on the total amount. Being the sharp businessman that Paul was, he accepted my suggestion at once. He identified one George, a structural engineer who was working in *Indian Railways* to design the structure, because the business had to run even during the construction. The project involved both modification and new construction, so we decided to work on the basis of a labour contract. George introduced a contractor Hanumanthappa, who he said was reliable and efficient in execution.

I became the manager of this modification project of our ancestral home: getting the building license sanctioned, managing procurement of construction materials, making weekly payments to the contractor, maintaining the expense account, and so forth. Paul paid for the materials and labour costs while I used my funds for obtaining the building license and paying the professional fees for design and supervision, apart from meeting a few other expenses pertaining to certain modifications in our living portion. Starting from July 1976, until the completion of the project in March 1977, every month I gave Paul the statement of money invested by him and me, as well as expenses incurred under different heads.

My aunt Kanakammal and her husband Ramasawmi lived with us for a few months during March to May 1977. It was during their stay sometime in April we

planned a function to celebrate my father's 60th birth anniversary and the *upanayanam* for me, Raghu, as well as for the eldest sons of my cousins Rajagopal and Sounder. Coincidentally, it was the *centenary year* of our ancestral home. Added to this, as we had completed the first floor construction, it was also a *grihapravesham*.

An interesting corollary to the four-in-one celebration at our ancestral home is the source of money that was used for the event: Prof. Narayana Iyengar's son Seshadri (my father's cousin), who was employed with the *Office of the Accountant General* (AG's Office), Bangalore, visited us one weekend in March 1977 with a cheque in his hand. It was a cheque in favour of Kaveriammal for a little over four thousand rupees. Seshadri explained that a recent State Government Order issued under the new pension policy directed that widows of those State Government employees who were not receiving pension would be paid the same with effect from 1st November 1975. As he was an Accounts Officer at the AG's Office, which handled pensions, Seshadri immediately prepared the arrears statement based on the retirement details of M A Srinivasachar (1880–1942) who retired as Office Superintendent at *Mysore Government Insurance Department* in 1935, and promptly collected the cheque!

All of us felt fortunate to be a part of the centenary celebration of our ancestral home, which was not

merely blessed by our grandmother Kaveriammal but even the money spent for it was hers!

In April 1977, I shifted to the newly-built first floor and in August, I joined an executive MBA program in *Bangalore University* – a course that had just started at the university. Viji completed her M.Phil. (1976–78) at *Jawaharal Nehru University* (JNU) while Raghu discontinued his post-graduate diploma at Delhi because he got the job of a System Analyst at *Indian Institute of Technology, Madras* (IIT-M).

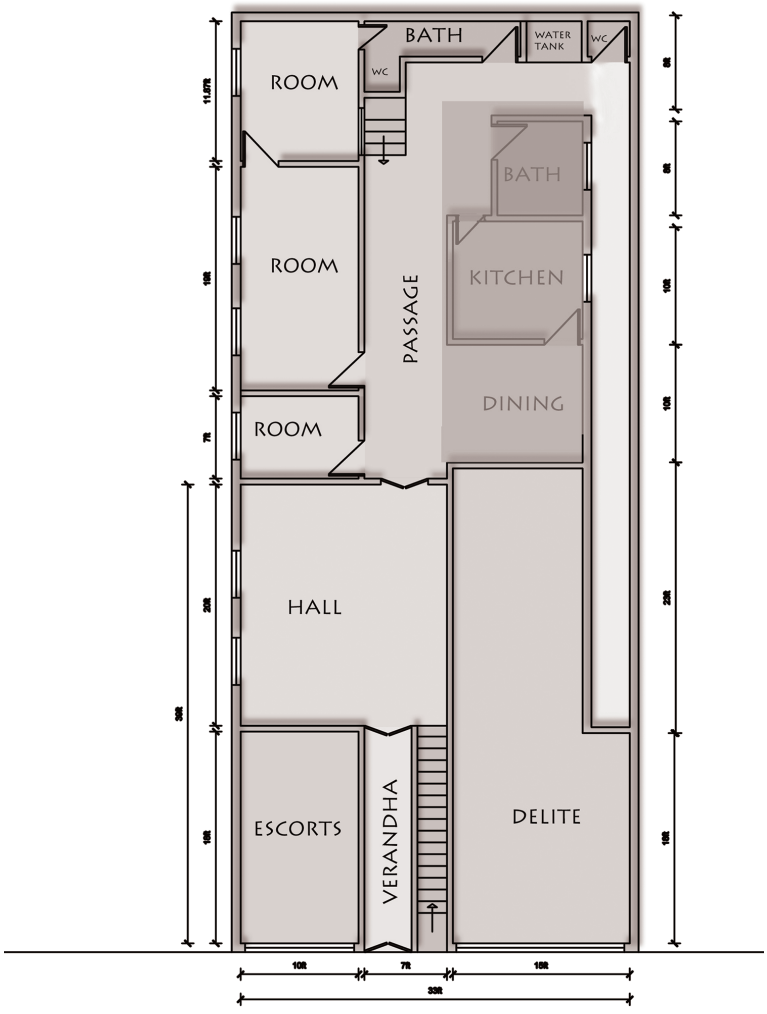
Additions to First Floor

I MARRIED HEMA in May 1980, and in 1981 I joined a post-graduate diploma programme at the *Indian Institute of Science* (IISc.) – it was close to her mother's house in Malleswaram and I could pick her up while coming back home. This also enabled her to spend some time with her parents and grandmother. In the same year—even as I was working at ITI and studying at IISc.—I established a business enterprise: *Interconnections*, with Hema as the proprietor. I was designing and manufacturing electronic instruments on a part-time basis. *Interconnections* was doing fairly well by 1984 and so I resigned my job at ITI to become a full-time entrepreneur. In 1985, I joined one of my vendor's firm as a partner (Commercial Director) to utilise my time fully.

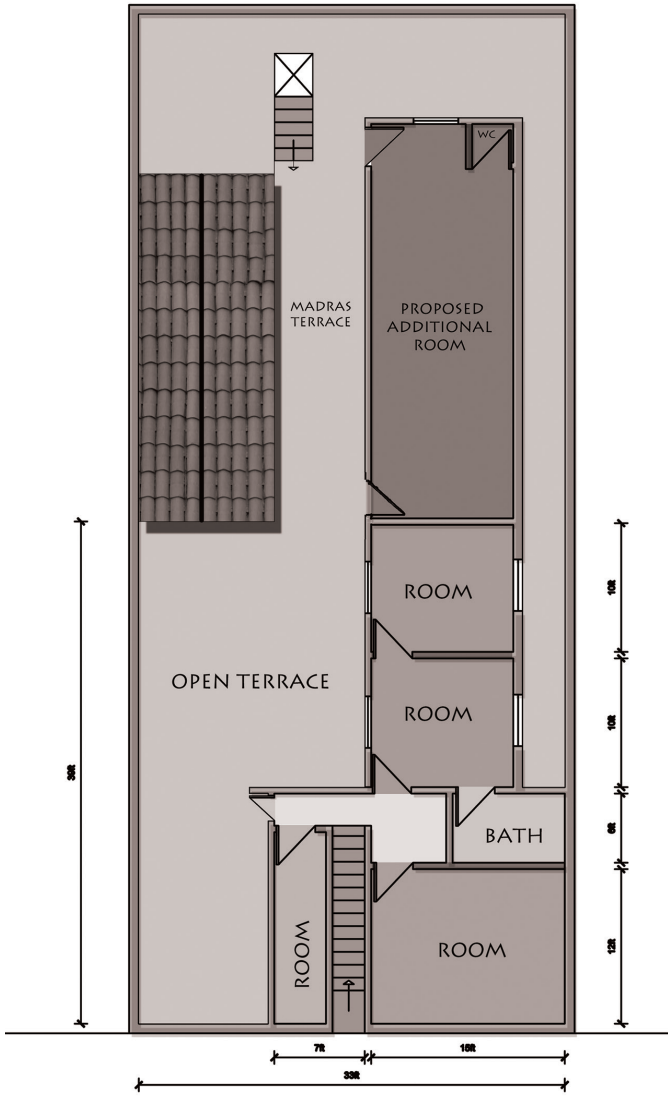
By Financial Year 1987–88, both the enterprises that I was managing had become stable. And so, with my own funds this time, I decided to modify one half of the rear portion of our ancestral home that had tiled roof. I wanted to add a couple of more rooms on the first floor, behind the three new rooms that were built in 1976. This called for demolition of the dining hall, kitchen, and bathroom on the ground floor to enable building new foundation and columns.

Raghu had introduced me to Raghavendra Rao, who had done his M.Tech. (Structural Engineering) at IIT-M and had taken up a teaching assignment with *Bangalore University*. I consulted Rao to design the structure for the new building. Once again I engaged the contractor Kannan who I knew well, along with his team of Carpenter Doraiswamy and Electrician Babu.

Having finalized the drawings and estimates, I had my parents shifted to Vasanthi's house at J P Nagar (six miles from home), while the four of us shifted to my father-in-law's house at Malleswaram. Hari was three-and-a-half and Ram was less than a year old, so there were no issues related to schooling. It was convenient for Hema to attend to her teaching job, which was at a college in Malleswaram. The construction work started in all earnest during the second half 1987, exactly ten years after completion of the major modification completed during the centenary year of our house.

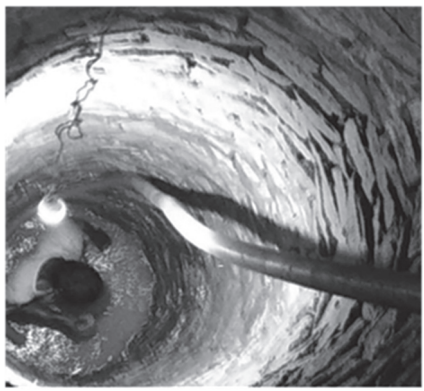


PLAN FOR MODIFICATION OF THE GROUND FLOOR (1987)



PLAN FOR MODIFICATION OF THE FIRST FLOOR (1987)

While digging near the kitchen area for erecting a column, we received a boon in the form of an open well brimming with clear water. The well was simply covered with a large, flat granite stone about two feet below the floor level. The water level was twenty feet below the ground. I had the water tested in a laboratory and it was certified absolutely fit for drinking.



DISCOVERY OF THE WELL (1987)

Ever since my mother got married (1943) and shifted from Mysore to our ancestral home, there was always a problem for water in our house. She has often told me about the difficulties the family faced. Even during most of my younger years, we got water from the Maharashtrian neighbour who had a well or from the public tap near the house. It was only during 1976 we built a water storage facility and installed a pump for lifting the water to the second floor.

The grand construction project that I initiated in 1987 was completed in little over four months and we moved back to our home in January 1988. Except for the demise of my grandmother Kaveriammal in 1984, several happy events took place in my family between the two construction projects that I undertook during 1977–87: it started with celebrating centenary year our ancestral home which was combined with my father's sixtieth birth anniversary and house-warming of the first floor (1977), my younger sisters Viji (1980) and Latha (1983) getting married – apart from my own marriage with Hema (1980), our maiden trip abroad to Thailand and Singapore (1983), birth of Archana (Viji's daughter, 1982), birth of Naresh (Latha's son, 1985), and our children – Hari (1984) and Ram (1986).

A couple of unusual developments also took place during this period.

In July 1979, there was a circular from the ITI Administrative Department that said officers who have completed five years of service could avail of a car loan of ₹20,000 that could be repaid at the rate of ₹200 per month over ten years. I casually mentioned this to Paul and he came up with an offer: I buy a reasonably good second-hand Ambassador car (which was the most popular family car in those days) and he would use it. He would pay me ₹200 every month, which otherwise would be deducted from my salary. He further suggested

that I could use his Standard Herald whenever I needed it. As the car proposed to be purchased would be in my name, I did not see any problem and agreed to the deal. Within a week of my applying for the car loan, it was sanctioned.

STANDARD HERALD

AMBASSADOR

From a newspaper advertisement, Paul identified a 1969 model Ambassador owned by a professor of *Indian Institute of Science*, which had been sparingly used. We bought it for ₹17,500. Paul taught me driving in that car for a week and I got my driving license before end of that year. If not for Paul, I would never have dreamt of buying a car at that stage of my life!

In 1982, Paul decided to take up, along with an investment partner, a major government contract – building a dam in Idukki, Kerala as part of a hydro-electric project. Paul handed over the management of DELITE to his son Sojan who was married by then, and left for Kerala with his family. Unfortunately within a couple of years, Sojan brought the business down due to several factors – lack of discipline, lack of management skills, and bad association. By this time, I had resigned my job at ITI and established a couple of enterprises.

Paul came back for a short period in 1985 to set right the business. Having understood that it had gone beyond repair, he decided to change the line of business to auto spare-parts, for he saw good future in it, with increasing sale of two-wheelers and auto-rickshaws in Bangalore. He discussed it with me and the other tenant Vargheese. He asked if we could join the business as he did not want Sojan to manage it alone. While Paul and Vargheese brought in cash investment,

my share was a nominal sum of ₹50,000 that otherwise should have been paid as advance for the premises. The earlier advance given for building construction had already been adjusted through monthly rents over seven years. A suitable partnership agreement was drawn and *DELITE Automobiles* was inaugurated on 2nd December 1985 by Sri S R Bommai, Minister for Revenue for Karnataka. Paul again left for Kerala to continue with the government project.

1986 was a terrible year for Paul. There was a leak in the dam that was being built and it became a political issue in Kerala. The Minister for Electricity of Kerala had to resign after being accused of corruption. The payments that were due to Paul from the government were struck. Meanwhile Paul's third son Xavier, who was married in 1985, met with a road accident in April 1986 and succumbed to the injuries. In October 1986, Paul who had just completed sixty years had a massive heart-attack and succumbed to it. It look a long time for the family to overcome the shock.

Meanwhile, the couple of enterprises that I had established were running well. As the Ambassador car was in my name, I was using it regularly from the time I resigned from ITI, having settled the balance loan amount from my gratuity. It also served as a status symbol during my initial entrepreneurial years – others would interpret that I was a successful first-generation

entrepreneur! The car served us well for nearly seven years (it was being used by Paul during 1979–82) – we made several outstation trips to Coimbatore, Coonoor, Guruvayoor, Mysore, and so on, until 1988, when I bought a Maruti Suzuki van.

Further Additions to the First Floor

With the new kitchen, dining, and bathroom facilities as well as an additional room on the first floor, life was going on smoothly all through 1988. Never did I imagine that it was the *calm before the storm*.

After I taught Hema driving, I bought her a second-hand Fiat during the second half of 1987. Ram was about to complete his first year, so we all went to Tirupati during the end of 1987 for a family ritual. In March 1989, Hema and I registered for *Complete Health Improvement Program* (CHIP) – a lecture series spread over two weeks by the US Physician Dr. Hans Diehl, who was working as a Professor and Consultant at *Loma Linda University*, California. The lectures were preceded and succeeded by a complete medical check-up, for Dr. Diehl promised dramatic positive changes in general health if one were to follow his advice. This program was organised by Rtn. Ramesh Pai who had just then established *Manipal Hospital*. Hema attended all the lectures but I could not, because I had to leave for Europe on urgent business. However, both of us

underwent the medical check-ups. According to the test reports, both of us were fit and fine.

In April, Hema had a swelling in her right knee and could not take even a step owing to severe pain. I immediately took her to the well-known orthopaedic Dr. Srinivasan and he suggested that we consult Dr. Mahendranath, a rheumatologist who had just then returned from the UK. After a couple of weeks of treatment, Hema got back to normal life.

My father suddenly took ill during the first week of May and was admitted to *St. Philomina's Hospital*. Immediately after my grandmother's death in 1984, my father was diagnosed with enlargement of heart and was on medication. During May 1987, he was hospitalized for a few days but this time, he succumbed to his cardiac problem and breathed his last on the night of 11th May.

Just a month before that I had taken charge as President of *Consortium of Electronics Industries of Karnataka* (CLIK), an industry body to address grievances of electronics industries. Prior to this, my factory faced the brunt of a couple of raids from sales tax and excise vigilance departments. It was a testing time for me and my family.

Raghu, my younger brother who was employed with IIT-M as System Analyst had left for Oman in August 1983 for better prospects. During end of February

1990, I got a call from one of his friends informing me that Raghu had lost all his money by investing in a friend's business and had also quit his job. I wrote to my brother to come back home immediately and join me in performing the rituals for our father's first death anniversary.

When he returned in March 1990, it came as a great relief to see him safe albeit financial setbacks. I established an enterprise – *Software Sciences*, so that he could keep himself busy doing work in the domain that he had chosen. However, in November, he got an assignment as *Computer Advisor* to the President of Nauru, a tiny island country in the Pacific Ocean, northeast of Australia, which has the lowest population in the world – around 12,500.

The situations I faced in the twenty months starting from April 1989 all the way to November 1990 both in my family and my businesses made me introspect deeply to take a few decisions:

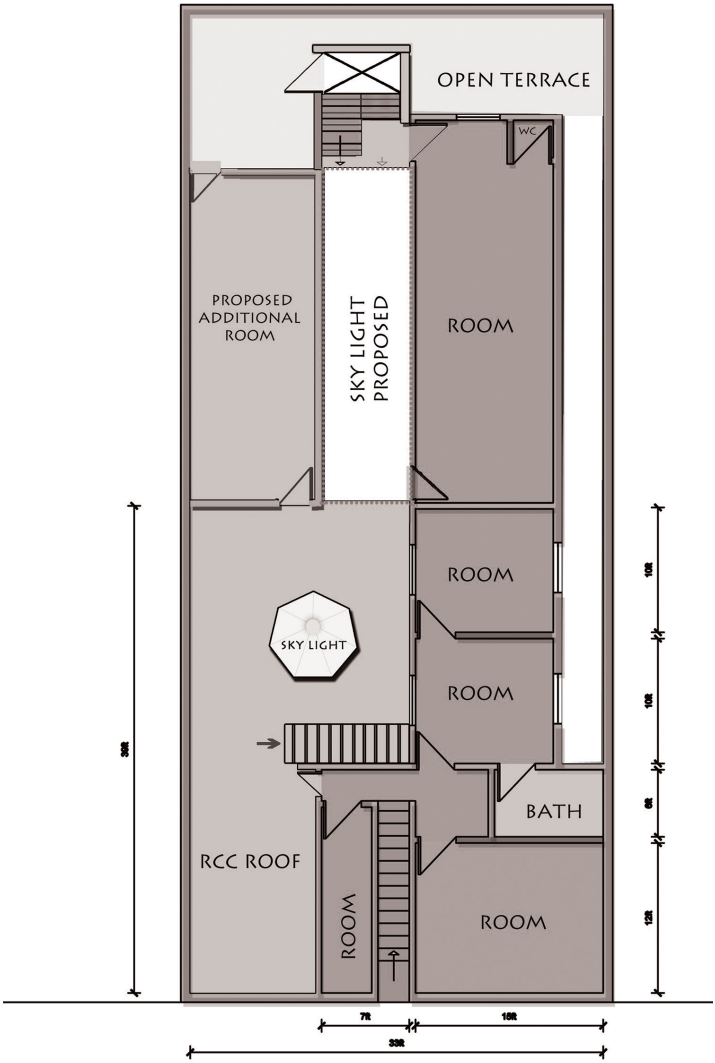
1. I should come out of my business enterprises in the next two to three years in a systematic manner without affecting the business and my family finances.
2. I should complete the modification of the balance old portion of the ancestral home.
3. I should plan a foreign holiday with my family for a fairly long duration during April to May 1991 (which was the summer vacation period

for both Hema and the children) to get some free time and mental space to plan my next course of action.

As part of the last stage of modification of our ancestral home, I decided to demolish the other side of the tiled roof (in the old portion) and rebuild the ground floor rooms to enable to build additional room on the first floor. Also I decided to change the roof of the passage and hall from Madras terrace to RCC with skylights.

Once again I engaged the services of Raghavendra Rao as structural design consultant. For the construction I engaged the services of Radhakrishna, a civil contractor. He had purchased the house next to ours from the Maharastrian family and was building a five-storey commercial complex. I thought it would be easier to get it done through him as he was visiting the site every day and compared to the mammoth structure that he was building, my requirement was significantly smaller. I also thought that by giving him the project I would be pre-empting any possible conflicts that may arise between the neighbours. Radhakrishna agreed to take up the work.

Based on my earlier experience, I estimated it would take around four months for modification and additions. After finalizing the design consultant and contractor, I went about planning my family vacation to Europe and USA. The tour also combined some of



PLAN FOR MODIFICATION OF THE FIRST FLOOR (1991)

my business work at Paris and New York. The total duration was five weeks, covering Germany, United States, and UK.

Having finalized the tour schedule, I bought the tickets and obtained the visas by middle of March 1991. The departure date was 12th April, given that Hema's last working day was 10th April. Having completed my two-year term as President of CLIK, I convened an Annual General Meeting of the association and presented the Receipts and Expenses Statement for the Financial year 1990–91 on 10th April – much earlier than the expected last date of 31st July. Meanwhile, we vacated the portion of the ground floor that had to be demolished and informed the contractor about our travel plans so that he can complete demolition work in our absence.

We finished our tour successfully and landed back in Bangalore on 19th May 1991. We were in the process of overcoming our jet lag when on the 21st we heard the news of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. He was killed in a bomb blast during one of his election rallies in Tamil Nadu. Later in the day, when I visited our ancestral home, I was shocked to note that nothing had happened.

Hari had just moved to the third standard and his school was reopening on 1st June. To speed up the work, I decided to stay with Hari on the first floor (which

had been partly let out to one of my friends as an office space). Hema with Ram stayed at Malleswaram with my in-laws. For four months, Hari and I managed the weekdays with bread for breakfast and dinner in one of the nearby restaurants. During the weekend Hema would come with Ram bringing cooked food from Malleswaram. We spent good time playing computer games and other indoor games until late in the night. The modification of the hall could not be completed so I postponed it to the following summer. I shifted my family (my mother was living with Vasanthi at J P Nagar) back to Ulsoor during Dasara (in October) when Hema had her autumn vacation.

OLD MADRAS ROAD IN THE 1990S

In February 1992, I arranged to send my mother to Nauru where Raghu was working. In May, I initiated

the hall modification project. After demolition, the contractor had not arranged to remove the debris for nearly two months, even after repeated follow-ups. I had to call my old contact Kannan of MES to get that done. For almost six months four of us lived literally in the rear portion of the house. Finally, the contractor managed to complete the modification in time for us to celebrate Ram's sixth birthday (2nd December 1992) with his classmates and a few teachers.

By the end of March 1993, as decided, I came out of the three enterprises that I had founded during 1981–87 after completing all the modifications and additions to the ancestral home in November 1992. Soon after that, I co-founded another company – *Clixport India Private Limited*.

Kaveri Hall

In 1995, Raghu shifted from Nauru to Pohnpei, another small island town, which was part of the Federated States of Micronesia. After he moved to Pohnpei, he visited Bangalore for a few days and my mother accompanied him on his return to Pohnpei. When Vasanthi's daughter Suman's marriage was fixed, Raghu brought my mother back home for the engagement ceremony that was held in August 1997 and returned to Pohnpei.

In July 1999, we received an e-mail from one of Raghu's friends saying that he was seriously ill and there

was no proper medical facility in Pohnepi. That was the time we had just set up an internet connection and there were flurry of mails to and from Raghu's friends. Finally they booked him on a flight leaving Pohnpei on 16th July that reached Chennai on 17th night via Manila and Singapore. He had to change the flight at Manila and so Goldy Myers, an American lady who was managing an NGO at Pohnpei, accompanied him up to Manila to help him board the *Singapore Airlines* flight. With the help of Hema's uncle Rangarajan who was earlier with *International Civil Aviation Organisation*, we could receive Raghu as he was wheeled out of the aircraft and get the clearances done quickly.

We drove straight to *Apollo Hospital* in the middle of the night. The doctors diagnosed Raghu's illness as stage four cancer of stomach/oesophagus. The next day we flew him down to Bangalore and got him admitted to *Bangalore Cancer Hospital*. With four cycles of chemotherapy he survived for less than four months and breathed his last on 2nd November 1999. When he was in the hospital, I would stay with him at night. During one of our several conversations, he once said, "*Anna*, why don't you think of building a hall on the second floor? This will help in having family get-together, which we often have, and it won't disturb the home setting."

It took almost four years for me to implement that. In 2000–01, I took over the mantle of President of

the Rotary Club that I was a member of since 1988. I had to visit Pohnpei to sort and settle my deceased brother's house-hold belongings, bank accounts, etc., and distribute some of the items to local NGOs. The

SRINIVASA NILAYAM IN THE 1990S

whole process of travel and the job took about ten days. In 2002, we celebrated the 125th anniversary of our ancestral home, which coincided with my mother's 75th birthday.

In May 2003, while talking to my fellow Rotarian Srinivas, a civil contractor, I mentioned about building a hall on the second floor of our ancestral home with a tiled roof and openings on either sides. He enthusiastically agreed to do it on a *cost of materials* and *labour charges* basis. I decided to construct a room and a rest-room as part of the hall. Srinivas completed the project in about three months' time. I decided to name the hall as *Kaveri Hall* after my paternal grandmother, as she was the pillar of support to both her children and all fourteen of her grandchildren throughout her life. Ten years earlier, I had established *Kaveri Trust* to help economically underprivileged girls for their education. I decided to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the trust by inaugurating *Kaveri Hall*.

Hari had started learning the violin out of his own interest when he was in high school but discontinued during his board exams. Through one of her contacts Hema connected him with *Vidwan* Basavangudi G Nataraj. Along with his engineering course at *BMS College of Engineering*, Hari started attending violin classes. When we were set to inaugurate *Kaveri Hall*, my mother learnt that I was planning to have a get-together. Ever the music enthusiast, she said, "Why

don't we have a Carnatic music concert by Hari's *guru* for the inauguration?" When I spoke to Sri Nataraj, he was delighted and readily agreed. *Kaveri Hall* was inaugurated on *27th September 2003*. I told my nephews, nieces, and children to manage the programme. We honoured Rtn. Srinivas, *Vidwan* Nataraj, and the percussionists who accompanied him.

AT THE INAUGURATION OF KAVERI HALL

After Raghu's death, I decided to hand over the management of *Clixport India Private Limited* to another director with the closure of Financial Year 2000–01 after complying with all the requirements of government. I registered for a doctoral program primarily to fulfil the wishes of my departed brother who died in the midst of his Ph.D. (which he had

been pursuing in *Nova Southeastern University* at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA). Around this time, having been nominated as Chairman for *Rotary District Avoidable Blindness Committee*, I decided to divide my time between research and social work.

After inaugurating *Kaveri Hall*, we had a few family get-togethers and Rotary meetings. In July 2004, Hema took over the mantle of President of *Inner Wheel Club of Koramangala*, which has members who are the wives of the Rotarians of *Rotary Bangalore Koramangala* as well as women residing in Koramangala who are interested in social work. The installation programme was conducted in *Kaveri Hall*. There were well over fifty participants.

We also celebrated our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in May 2005. That was also the time when we released *Roots and Wings* – my mother's biography, authored by my nephew Naresh and my son Hari. My mother's 80th birthday was celebrated in 2007 accompanied by traditional rituals. Later in May 2011, *The New Bhagavad-Gita* (which Hari co-wrote with his uncle Dr. Koti Sreekrishna) was formally released at *Kaveri Hall* with Dr. B S Ramachandra as the Chief Guest and Hari's *guru* Dr. L Subramaniam in attendance. Over seventy people attended the book release.

As part of consolidation and my plan to hand over the management to my next generation, I informed

my tenants at that time (*Escorts Shoe Company* and *Raghavendra Metal Mart*) in the beginning of 2004 to vacate the shops at the earliest. While Keshavaiah vacated in August 2004, Vargheese dragged on, as there were talks of Metro Rail and he thought he might receive some compensation from them. He vacated finally in August 2006 after much cajoling.

After close to thirty-four years, we were the sole occupants of the whole building, which now is a three-storied edifice.

Our Contribution to Bangalore Metro

In early 2007, we received a notice from *Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board* (KIADB) that they plan to acquire about 370 sq. ft. in the front portion of our house for the purpose of road expansion in view of construction by the *Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation* (BMRC). After fulfilling all the requirements by submitting copies of the necessary documents to KIADB, we received compensation that was less than 40% of prevailing market price for the land in our area.

As a precaution, much earlier to demolition, with the help of a local contractor, I had gotten the front door and shutters shifted inside by leaving about eleven feet from the road, which was a little more than what KIADB had indicated. A team of Metro Rail engineers visited the premises in April 2008 to examine the building condition before demolition. In May another

team visited the house to mark the cutting lines for demolition. When I measured the area marked for demolition, it was some 50 sq. ft. more than what they had paid for.

I brought this to the notice of the Managing Director of BMRC by writing a letter, requesting them to either re-mark according the dimensions indicated in the earlier land acquisition letter or pay the appropriate compensation if they wished to acquire the additional area. After another visit by their engineers, they agreed to pay the additional compensation. However, a special permission had to be obtained from the Ministry of Finance, Government of Karnataka because the compensation was paid by the State government. The BMRC authorities issued a letter assuring compensation for the additional area and requested me to allow demolition.

On the Ph.D. front, by end-2007 I submitted a synopsis of my doctoral thesis to the university, seeking permission to submit the final thesis. During mid-2008, while I had completed writing a couple of chapters, I observed that there was a growth in my right nostril. I consulted an ENT surgeon, who after examination suggested that I get admitted to his nursing home for a day to get the growth surgically removed.

Given that the front portion of our house would be demolished at any time by the Metro authorities, we decided to shift to the first floor of my mother-in-

law's in Malleswaram where Hari had been staying by himself. After we shifted (in September), I got admitted to the nursing home for surgery in the middle of September. The polyp was surgically removed and sent for biopsy. The growth turned out to be *malignant* and was designated '*Soft Tissue Sarcoma*.'

Since the demolition had not yet taken place, I wrote a letter to the Managing Director of BMRC, explaining my health condition and requested him to postpone the demolition of our building to a date after I returned from medical treatment. After getting the biopsy done again in another diagnostic lab and when the malignancy was reconfirmed, I consulted two specialists – a Head and Neck Oncologist and a senior Onco-surgeon for further course of action. While one suggested to undergo another surgery to establish the negative region, the other suggested to have another scan done for taking a decision. I discussed this with my wife and we decided that I undergo another surgery to establish negative region.

I again got admitted to an ENT nursing home during the first week of October 2008 and was operated by a team of doctors – an ENT surgeon, plastic surgeon, and anaesthetist led by a Head and Neck Oncology surgeon. The operation went on for nearly four hours. Tissue-nerve-bone samples close to the area where the polyp was present were drawn and sent for biopsy. Fortunately all the samples were found to be benign.

The Head and Neck Oncologist suggested that I visit him once in three months and undergo protocol check-ups every six months.

A day after the operation, I was informed that the Metro authorities had demolished the front portion of our house on the day I was operated *without any prior information*. The same night there was a theft in the house. As Hari had gone to the US to attend a conference, Hema managed the situation all alone.

On getting discharged from the hospital, I had several issues to be sorted out; though getting back to normal was the priority, equally important were modifying the demolished house and completing the unfinished thesis.

I vividly recall the day I got discharged from the hospital after my second surgery to establish negative region. It was the eighth day of Dasara and the hospital staff was busy in organizing for the celebrations, as the following two days were holidays. I had already spent five days in the hospital and was itching to get back home. When I inquired with the matron about discharge, she said that my oncologist had left for Goa on a holiday and would return only two days later. Hence, I may have to wait. I rang up my oncologist on his mobile phone and told him that I felt fit enough to return home. I requested him to advice the hospital staff to discharge me. He instructed the matron over phone to discharge me by evening.

In a month's time, I was able to move around and started visiting BMRC and KIADB offices to follow up with compensation for the additional area. I also identified a contractor by name Ananth who was building a four-storey building just behind our ancestral home. Ananth said that generally he did not take up any contract less than a couple of crores. I convinced him that he could supply the materials and provide only the labour or connect me to independent contractors to whom he normally outsourced jobs like civil construction, electrical works, painting, etc. and that I would directly settle their payments on weekly basis.

In 1999, Hema had built a house on the site that her father had gifted her several years ago – near *M S Ramaiah Hospital*, off New BEL Road (around six miles from our house). It was constructed in the Laurie Baker style and was designed by Dr. Yogananda, an architect who specializes in eco-friendly buildings. To get some help with the modification of our ancestral house after the Metro fracas, I called up Dr. Yogananda, who connected me to another architect by name Pankaj Modi, who specialized in preservation of heritage properties. Pankaj was also teaching in couple of engineering colleges. Pankaj suggested that I engage the services of Kanickraj, Dr. Yogananda's assistant, to take care of the structural aspects.

The first floor of my mother-in-law's house in Malleswaram was not big enough for the five of us, so I decided to move into the neighbouring property – an independent, four bedroom, three-storey building. By February 2009 we settled down in the new house. Meanwhile, I finalized the plan for modifications and additions to the ancestral home with the help of Pankaj.

In a span of thirty-eight years, this was the ninth time I was getting into modifying the house but this time it was a humungous task for various reasons – my prevailing health condition, constant follow-ups with government officials for compensation, and my thesis-writing that demanded more focus, just to name a few. I had a couple of on-going assignments too but that did not demand as much of time as it demanded efforts. Added to this, Hema developed certain menopause-related issues and had to undergo hysterectomy during June 2009.

The civil work went on for over twenty months starting from April 2009 with several breaks in between, because of change of contractors. During this period I had to work with four civil contractors: Murugan #1 for three months, then it was Palani for a couple of months, followed by Ekambaram for nearly four months, and Murugan #2 for seven months. Apart from this, there were two electrical contractors, two painting contractors, and two plumbing contractors

and couple of tile / marble-laying contractors. Typically, each of these small-time contractors were migrants from neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu or Kerala who had initially come to earn their livelihood and over time had become freelancing contractors.

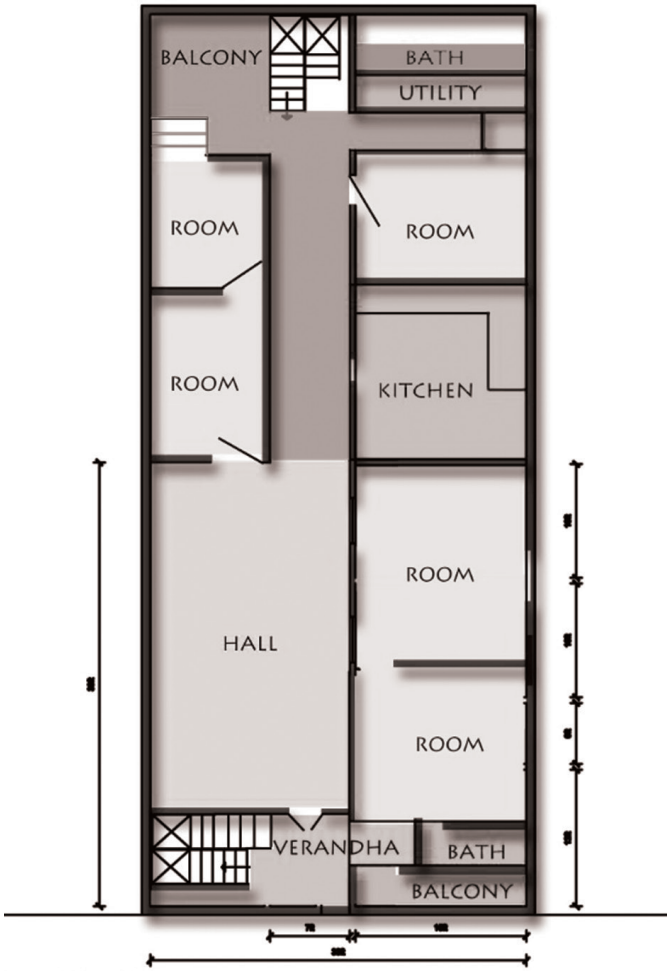
While there were a few minor modifications in the ground floor, the open space on the first floor terrace was converted to drawing room, *verandah*, and staircase room, apart from two more rooms being added in the second floor. Most of the items like grill-work, doors, windows, and steel staircase were reused. Depending on the floor in which work was being done, all the household items had to be first transferred before taking up the work. As there were a few demolitions as well as a few additions in each of the floors, taking out and bringing in materials had to be done one after the other.

With repeated change in the civil team, execution of such a project would test the patience of any professional. Fortunately since my childhood, I observed my mother and paternal grandmother bringing us up (the five of us being of different natures) in much tougher conditions. This learning had come handy for me during such situations. For every visit of Pankaj, I had to pay him ₹500 in addition to his overall consultancy charges of ₹25,000. I ended up paying him ₹75,000, which should give an idea of the number of visits Pankaj made!

In the midst of all these modifications, I spent a few hours every day, mostly in the late evenings, writing my thesis. My supervisor, Prof. M K Sridhar was then on deputation from *Bangalore University* to the Government of Karnataka to work as Secretary and Executive Director of *Karnataka Knowledge Commission*. Apart from visiting my home in person when I was discharged from the hospital, he motivated me at every stage as every chapter was completed. I managed to complete the thesis in the first week of November 2009. As I completed my sixtieth year of existence on this planet, I was awarded a Ph.D. degree after defending my thesis (on 27th July 2010).

Meanwhile, having completed sixty years, my family organised a small get-together of my close relatives at the Malleswaram residence. After this, Hema went on a week-long pilgrimage to Badrinath and other sacred spots along with her mother, her aunts, and her brother and his family.

Before moving back to our ancestral home, we performed a *Sudarshana-homa*, which is supposed to give relief from unintended worries and sufferings. We moved back to our ancestral home during second week of March 2011, this time to live on the first floor. Some modifications were pending in the ground floor, which had become the storehouse for the many items gathered over generations. Living in the first floor also



PLAN FOR MODIFICATION OF THE FIRST FLOOR (2011)

enabled us to use *Kaveri Hall* on a daily basis. While settling down this time, never did we imagine that we would have to move out again.

Back in our ancestral home, we were slowly settling down in the modified first floor. We lost quite a few things in our absence. It took a month to segregate and discard many things that had accumulated over decades. In November 2011, Hari decided to move to a flat that I had purchased sometime during 1995 in Frazer Town (a couple of miles away from our house).

Further Modifications

One of our neighbours in Halasuru is Sunil, an aggressive, middle-aged Marwari, who is into financing business. In three years (2009–11), he acquired three properties – two of them adjacent to our house and the third one behind the first one. His plan was to build a five-storey commercial building.

Sunil started the demolition of the neighbouring properties in September 2012 and this went on for a few months. When he started digging for laying the foundation, there was continuous flow of water. They were not able to identify the source. After a few months' consultations with his architect and structural engineers, Sunil decided to erect a pile foundation in view of water logging.

Because of the constant construction activity next door, there was lot of dust and noise during most part

of the day. In April 2013, the four of us (my mother, Hema, Ram, and I) were down with fever and allergy. Hema was the worst affected and she had to attend to her college work as well. We decided to shift for a couple of years to the house that Hema had built until the construction work in our neighbourhood got completed. Ever since Hema built the house in 1999, it was given for rent. Having decided to move there, we requested the tenants to vacate, which they did by May. We then carried out certain additions, mostly carpentry and electrical work, and had the whole house painted. We shifted by the end of July. Hari vacated the flat at Frazer Town and joined us in November. As I had couple of assignments on hand, the modifications planned for the ground floor of our ancestral home got delayed.

Meanwhile, my friend Rtn. Manjunath Shetty who was elected as the District Governor for the Rotary year 2014–15 approached me in January 2014, requesting for office space of 400 sq. ft. during his term as Governor. I suggested that he use the drawing room on the first floor so that I could independently carry out modifications in the ground floor. Rtn. Shetty moved in during March 2014. Hema decided to visit her brother and cousins in the US during April and May, so I decided to start the modification work of the ground floor in June, after her return.

Once the Metro work was completed, *Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagar Palike* (BBMP) re-laid the road and as a result, the floor level of our house came down as compared to that of the road. During the rainy season, the ground floor was flooded. While doing the modification, I had to raise the floor level of the entire ground floor by two feet to avoid future flooding. All the doors and some of the windows in the ground floor had to be removed and re-fixed.

As my mother was getting old, I decided to modify the dining room into her bedroom so that I could construct a small attached toilet next to it. The kitchen was also accordingly modified. This time I handed over the labour contract to Murugan #2, the last of the four contractors we engaged during 2009–11. The work that started in June 2014 was completed by the end of the year.

In August 2014, Ram was unwell for quite a while and had to be admitted to a nursing home for a couple of days. Immediately after that Hema had some pain under her right arm and decided to consult a General Physician (GP) who had her practice nearby. The GP suggested a scan to be done and referred Hema to a radiologist. Seeing the scan report, the GP suspected breast cancer and recommended that Hema consult a general Onco-surgeon Dr. Manjunath Shastri, who was practising in Malleswaram.

PLAN FOR MODIFICATION OF THE GROUND FLOOR (2014)

After a slew of preliminary tests, the diagnosis confirmed it was Stage 2 breast cancer. Dr. Shastri suggested an early surgery and based on the pathology reports, he said that Hema may have to undergo radiation and chemotherapy. Hema was operated in October 2014 and was discharged in three days' time. Coincidentally Hari was visiting the US during the surgery (as was the case when I got operated in 2008).

A few weeks after recovering from surgery, Hema consulted a Radiation Oncologist in *M S Ramaiah Hospital* and went through some thirty-five sittings of radiation, five times a week, during November end to early January. She was also attending to her work. Meanwhile, having completed the modifications, I shifted with my mother to our ancestral home in November, while Hema was managing with Hari and Ram at her house.

After completing the radiation cycle, Hema consulted a Medical Oncologist who suggested that she undergo four cycles of chemotherapy as protocol treatment. Hema reconfirmed this with another oncologist, specialised in breast cancer as suggested by one of her relatives who is also an oncologist practising in the US.

In February 2015, Hema was admitted to a Cancer Hospital in South Bangalore for chemotherapy, because my niece was living nearby. That way, I could give home-made food to Hema when she was in the

hospital. I brought Hema back to our home after her first chemo, while Hari and Ram continued to stay at Hema's house for a few more months.

After Hema underwent the first cycle of chemotherapy, she underwent lot of trauma. Looking at her suffering, my mother was very much upset. It was during this time, my mother gave me a bunch of hand-written *shloka*s on Rama and Anjaneya that she has been reciting for decades and wanted me to make photocopies so that she could give to all her loved ones. This triggered an idea in me – *Why not make a nice booklet of these devotional verses and distribute it to many more?* I thought it would be only appropriate to release the booklet on the occasion of my mother's birthday, which was three weeks from then.

I suggested to my son Hari and nephew Naresh to develop the booklet containing these *shloka*s and they readily agreed. The renowned polymath and Sanskrit scholar *Shatavadhani* Dr. R Ganesh was kind enough to write a short epilogue to this anthology. In a short span of a couple of weeks, the book titled *Stuti Samputa – In the Company of Prayer* was released on the occasion of my mother's eighty-eighth birthday (14th March 2015) in the presence of all the family members of my mother's children at our ancestral home. Dr. Ganesh graciously accepted our invitation and gave a lecture on the importance of *bhakti* in addition to formally releasing the book.

Hema completed her four cycles of chemo by April and started attending to her college work by May, only to take voluntary retirement from 1st June 2015, a year earlier to superannuation. She retired as the Principal of her college after more than three decades of work.

Most of the modifications were completed in the ground floor by end-2014. After Rtn. Shetty vacated the first floor office in July 2015, some more additions were carried out – internal partitions in the first floor to meet my office requirements, rain water harvesting facility, and tile roofing the compound.

For the last seven years, Hari has been living independently in his grandparents' house in Malleswaram. My mother, my wife, and I are living in the ground floor of our ancestral house while Ram lives independently in the rear part of the first floor. The front part has my office as well as the Business Incubator that I have established for start-ups that can make social impact.

BUSINESS INCUBATOR ON THE FIRST FLOOR (2021)

Conclusion

It is important for people to feel happy while conducting day-to-day life in general and during work in particular. Cultural ideas and practices shape our emotions. My family environment played a major role in shaping my life. My mother and paternal grandmother, who groomed me during my childhood years, were emotionally balanced, independent of situations. Even my wife has a similar nature to my mother – *minding her business without being inquisitive about my work or other activities*. So it was possible for me to take decisions that suited situations with respect to my ancestral home.

After my father's death in 1989 and transferring the *Khata* in my mother's name, I created an independent tax entity – *Indira Venkatesan HUF* with the ancestral home as the asset, and being the eldest son, assumed the position of *Karta* to manage the affairs. Since then, apart from spending the rental income on the maintenance of the premises and paying property tax, I have had to spend much more from my savings for

the modifications and additions. I had never considered this as burden because I thought it is important that the grandchildren of my parents inherit a home that would be comfortable to live or even to let out. I created a corpus fund for *Indira Venkatesan HUF* so that the accrued interest can take care of property tax payments as well as normal repairs.

TERRACE GARDEN OUTSIDE KAVERI HALL

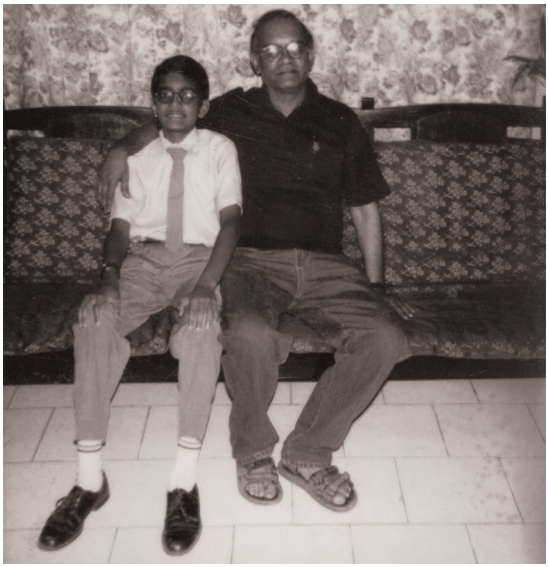
In the coming years, I plan to develop a museum *cum* library in the ground floor bearing the name of my great grandfather, M Raghavachari, which will house the pictures, family photos, curios, and books collected over time as well as the various mementos that I and some of my family members have received during the last few decades. This will perhaps keep alive the emotional connect desired by older generation with the younger generations.

EPILOGUE

From the time I was born, in December 1986, I have spent all my years in Bangalore and much of it in my ancestral house. Right from my childhood days, I always had the impression that our house was pretty big as compared to many houses that I came across, both in our locality and elsewhere. I did not, however, develop any superiority complex because of this, thanks to the way I was raised. In fact, I was hesitant to invite my friends from school or college to my home because I did not want them to get a feeling that I belong to a rich family – a natural assumption one may have after seeing a spacious house near the central business district.

For short periods, along with my family I lived in a few other houses in Bangalore: at my maternal grandmother's house in Malleswaram for a couple of years, at a rented house near my school in HAL III Stage for about a year, a couple of years at Malleswaram in another rented house, and a few years in my mother's house near *M S Ramaiah Hospital*. During the stay away from Ulsoor, I always missed my ancestral house.

I got a similar feeling even when we travelled outside Bangalore for a short holiday. In short, I feel homesick everywhere except in my ancestral home!



WITH MY FATHER AFTER A LONG DAY IN SCHOOL!

Our house is situated bang in the middle of a main artery road in a bustling locality of the city – there's traffic on the streets and a crowd on the pavement. It is noisy and dusty! Yet, the way our house has been designed, we are shielded from both noise and dust. Even the temperature inside the house is often much cooler than outside. Perhaps my attachment to my home has superseded discomforts. During the worst days of the pandemic, when all four of us (my grandmother, my

parents, and I) were tested positive for COVID, each one could live independently and feel secure, because our home is so spacious. We were able to manage the situation quite well.

Living independently on the first floor of our ancestral home for the last few years has made me introspect and engage in some soul-searching on several occasions – and this has led to answers and solutions. So in some sense, my home has become a spiritual place for me. Although I hail from a family rich in values that firmly believes in traditional concepts like *atithi devo bhava* (guests are like god), I believe that charity begins at home: take care of yourself and then your family, after which you extend hospitality to others, and finally serve society.

I have seen people migrate from different parts of India to Bangalore as well as people migrating from India to foreign lands, but I have never felt a need to migrate anywhere. Even if I have to live in a smaller place in Bangalore, I would like to retain the building for my office space. To me, *#136, Swami Vivekananda Road, Halasuru, Bengaluru 560008* represents my roots and hence, the presence of the souls of my forefathers.

8th FEBRUARY 2022
BENGALURU

Ram Ravikumar
Independent Auditor

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

M V Ravikumar (*b*. 1950) initially trained in Electronics and Communication Engineering at University Visvesvaraya College of Engineering, joined *Indian Telephone Industries Limited* (ITI) as a Research and Development Engineer in 1974. Along with his stint at ITI, he completed his Post-graduate Diploma in Industrial Management and MBA specialising in Marketing as well as Post-graduate Diploma in Software Engineering from the *Indian Institute of Science*. After coming out of ITI in 1984, Ravi co-founded manufacturing companies *U. V. Circuits Pvt. Ltd*. and *PAL Technologies Pvt. Ltd* as well as an export consortium company, *Clixport India Pvt. Ltd*. He served the *Consortium of Electronics Industries of Karnataka* as Secretary (1987–89) and President (1989–91) and *Bangalore Management Association* as Managing Committee member and as Editor of *Manage* (2002–4), the house journal of BMA.

In 2002, he came out of all businesses to pursue his research interest in the area of entrepreneurship

and obtained his Ph.D. in 2010. Post 2002, Ravi has been a consultant / advisor / mentor to small and medium industries, higher educational institutions, and to the *Indo-Korea Science Technology Centre*. Ravi is the founder-trustee of *Kaveri Trust* (1993), *Nayana Jyothi Trust* (2010), and *Rotary Avoidable Blindness Foundation* (2020). In 2014, he established *Impact Foundation* to mentor and support start-ups that would create social impact.

Ravi joined *Rotary International* in 1988 and since 2000 has been active in developing and implementing service projects in the areas of education and healthcare in general and eye-care in particular. Ravi has won several awards and has been recognised for his services to industries and community. *Rotary International* has bestowed on him ***Service above Self*** award, the highest recognition given to any Rotarian.

The other books he has authored are: *Doing Good in the World* (Tribute to Rtn. Dr. Gabriel Minder), *Doing Well, Feeling Happy* (autobiography), and *The Amazing Human Body*. He is presently co-authoring a work that chronicles the history of community ophthalmology in India.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS OF
Kaveri Trust

Roots and Wings – Lessons from a Life (2005)
ಸ್ತುತಿ ಸಂಪುಟ – In the Company of Prayer (2015)
ಬೇರುಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ರೆಕ್ಕೆಗಳು (2015)
Kutumba – A Journey of Emotions (2016)
जड़े और उड़ाने (2016)
Sixty Years, Sixty Episodes (2017)
Doing Well, Feeling Happy (2020)
The Amazing Human Body (2020)
Bhaja Govindam (2020)

SRINIVASA NILAYAM

Home Sweet Home chronicles the history of *Srinivasa Nilayam*, an ancient house in Halasuru, one of the oldest localities in the city of Bengaluru, India. Enmeshed with the story of the house is the multi-hued saga of a middle-class family and the individuals who toiled to preserve their abode for the future generations. It also affords the reader a view into the functioning of a joint family system of yore and the social landscape of the twentieth century.

Kaveri Trust
BENGALURU, INDIA